

# CURRENT HISTORY

A Journal of Contemporary World Affairs



## THE MIDDLE EAST

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# CURRENT HISTORY

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# CURRENT HISTORY

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Last fall saw the United States unleash a barrage of cruise missiles on Iraq in response to Iraqi moves against the Kurds in northern Iraq. While the attack renewed Western interest in the Kurds, and highlighted the regional dimensions of the Kurdish question, it did little to resolve the struggle of the largest ethnic group in the world without its own country.

## Kurdish Geopolitics

HENRI J. BARKEY

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**T**he news from Kurdistan is sad and grim." So began veteran Kurdish analyst Martin van Bruinessen in his 1986 *Middle East Report* assessment of the Kurds in Iran and Iraq. Ten years later, the news from Kurdistan is still sad and grim. The Kurds continue to fight with one another and with the governments of the states they inhabit.

But something has changed: for a people long relegated to the far recesses of historical memory, the Kurds have gained a significant degree of international prominence.<sup>1</sup> Their struggle and plight—the Kurds are the largest ethnic group in the world without their own state—now involve regional powers such as Turkey and Syria, and a distant superpower, the United States. The latter demonstrated its interest in September 1996 when it launched 44 cruise missiles against Iraq to punish an incursion into the Kurdish area in the northern part of the country. Moreover, there is a growing sense that the Kurdish issue is not about to disappear this time. Two sets of independent but nonetheless related events account for this transformation. The first is the combined impact of the cold war's end and the 1990–1991 Persian Gulf War that followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. The second

development is the intensification of the Kurdish insurgency in Turkey.

### INTERNAL DIVISIONS REINFORCED

In the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's defeat in the Persian Gulf War, Iraqi Kurds in northern Iraq, along with their Iraqi Shiite counterparts in the south, rose up against Baghdad. Both rebellions were crushed by remnants of the Iraqi army, which deployed helicopters and other heavy military equipment with deadly results. The suppression of the Kurdish rebellion caused a massive outflow of refugees to the Iranian and Turkish borders. The misery inflicted on the Kurds ultimately prompted the United States and its allies to create a "safe haven" in a small part of northern Iraq and to declare the area north of the 36th parallel in Iraq a no-flight zone. American, British, and French airplanes stationed at Turkish bases, under the rubric of Operation Provide Comfort, performed the task of protecting the Kurds. Reinvigorated by these international moves, the Kurds pushed back the Iraqi army and established themselves in the north in a de facto autonomous zone, much of which coincided with the ancestral Kurdish lands in Iraq.

As the Kurds returned to their homes and began to rebuild their lives, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK)—the two rival Kurdish parties that have struggled with each other since the mid-1960s—set up a joint administration in the city of Erbil. This incipient Kurdish state, however, was saddled not only with the refugees from the latest rebellion but

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<sup>1</sup>There are 12 million Kurds in Turkey, who make up 20 percent of the country's population. The corresponding figures for Iraq are 4.5 million or 25 percent of the total population; Iran, 6 million or 10 percent; and Syria, 1 million or 6 percent.



also with the psychological scars and economic devastation of Saddam's 1987–1988 anti-Kurdish campaign, in which the Iraqi leader used chemical weapons on the Kurdish civilian population and also destroyed some 4,000 villages, killing more than 100,000 Kurds. Moreover, following the Gulf War, northern Iraq was subjected to a double embargo: one imposed by the UN on Iraq and another imposed by Baghdad.

Iraq, of course, refused from the beginning to accept the new reality in the north and did its best to continue to punish the Kurds for their seditious behavior. Saddam's agents planted bombs in the north, his troops often stole part of the harvest, and he maintained the strict embargo on goods and fuel going to the safe haven in order to undermine the north's economy. The combined impact of the UN's and Saddam's embargoes was to reduce the population of northern Iraq to an unhealthy dependency on food aid provided by the United States, the UN, and nongovernmental relief organizations.

Under the strain of impossible economic conditions, the two Kurdish rivals began to fight over resources and, especially, money. In the absence of a viable economy, trade into and through northern Iraq, including smuggling, assumed a contentious dimension. The KDP, by virtue of controlling the more lucrative border posts along the Turkish frontier, obtained the lion's share of customs revenues. The dispute between the two parties and their leaders over trade and other issues escalated in 1994, with the PUK expelling the KDP from Erbil. The United States tried to mediate between the two groups in a series of talks conducted in Ireland in 1995, but these ultimately bogged down over the issue of monitors to supervise cease-fire agreements between the two parties. Northern Iraq, as a result, was further divided between a KDP-controlled northern zone and a PUK-controlled southern area. The stalemate between the two Kurdish rivals also created opportunities for Iran, Iraq, Turkey, and Syria to jockey for influence with the KDP, PUK, and other smaller Kurdish militias, further aggravating the divisions among the Iraqi Kurds.

The differences between KDP leader Massoud Barzani and PUK head Jalal Talabani extend beyond

the immediate scramble for resources. The two leaders differ significantly with respect to their origin, philosophy, base of support, and world view. Barzani, the son of the legendary Kurdish leader Molla Mustafa Barzani, has always assumed that leadership of the Kurds is his birthright. Molla Barzani managed to embrace Kurdish national aspirations without sacrificing the tribal nature of Kurdish society. His son has been true to his legacy. Massoud Barzani is, in the words of one observer, "unable to see the larger interest of Iraqi Kurds outside the parochial concerns of his tribal and family alliances. . ."<sup>2</sup> But Kurdish society has undergone significant changes since Molla Barzani's days. While a segment still adheres to old tribal ways and loyalties, another growing segment has become urban and modern.

The two largest cities in northern Iraq, Erbil and Sulaimaniya, have about a million residents each. It is in these and other urban areas, and in the region's emerging middle class, that Talabani's support base is concentrated, although he too benefits from tribal support. This rural-urban split accounts for the PUK's nationalist, progressive orientation and Talabani's unrelenting ambition to internationalize the Kurdish issue. But there are cultural affiliations involved as well. The two leaders' spheres of influence roughly coincide with the boundary lines created by the two main Kurdish dialects spoken in the north: KDP fol-

lowers tend to be Kurmanji speakers, while the PUK is stronger in the Sorani-speaking regions of southern Kurdistan. The relationship between the two groups is strained further by the deep personal animosity between their leaders: Barzani has never made peace with the fact that Talabani abandoned his father and the KDP to set up the rival organization.

## USING BAGHDAD

The stalemate in northern Iraq was broken when Barzani and his party struck a deal with Baghdad to unseat the PUK from Erbil. The KDP offensive that began on August 31, 1996, proved successful as Barzani's forces—initially backed by between 30,000 and 40,000 Iraqi troops with tanks and artillery—swept not just through Erbil but also through Sulaimaniya and Talabani's hometown of Koi Sanjak. It appeared that the KDP had finally succeeded in uniting the northern Iraqi Kurds. In the process it made a pact with the devil. In exchange

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<sup>2</sup>Kanan Makiya, "The Politics of Betrayal," *New York Review of Books*, October 17, 1996, p. 10.

for the military support, Saddam was allowed to infiltrate his intelligence operatives throughout the north, rounding up dissidents and defectors. Still, this proved a short-lived victory, as the PUK temporarily withdrew to the mountains to regroup. By mid-October, the PUK had launched a counteroffensive and with the exception of Erbil, had regained most of the territories lost to the KDP.

The KDP's initial victory and Saddam's reassertion of his influence over the north represented a major setback for American policy in Iraq and the region. For the United States, northern Iraq and its Kurdish population were both a humanitarian charge and a tool of its anti-Iraq policy. While American policy toward Baghdad consisted of sanctions, inspections, and military pressure and retaliation, Washington also concentrated on humanitarian relief and protection in northern Iraq, showing that it had compassion for a people who had long been subjected to terrible sufferings. Northern Iraq remained the single most important reminder that Iraq had a long way to go before being rehabilitated. The north was a continuous source of pressure on the regime in Baghdad, home to the broader Iraqi opposition, the Iraqi National Congress, and an important base for clandestine activities conducted against the regime in Baghdad.

### **SADDAM SEEKS AN ENTRÉE. . .**

Boxed in by UN resolutions and the no-flight zone, Saddam Hussein sought to undermine United States policy. In October 1994, he prodded the United States by moving troops south toward Kuwait, which resulted in an immediate deployment of American troops to the region. His more recent decision to act in the north was the result of a constellation of factors. The division between the two Kurdish factions had reached an apex, with neither side heeding United States calls for reconciliation, indicating to Saddam that American influence and interest in the north was on the decline. For Saddam, who felt that he was no longer an important player in the Middle East, the intra-Kurdish division provided him with an excellent opportunity to make his voice heard on the eve of the American presidential election. Moreover, United States success in getting UN Resolution 986—which would allow the limited export of oil for food—passed with all the requisite safeguards against cheating represented a strategic defeat for Saddam. He realized belatedly that Resolution 986 not only further diminished Iraqi sovereignty, but also deprived him of the one card—the suffering of the

people of Iraq—he had to play against the United States and the West. By intervening in northern Iraq, he put the implementation of the resolution in doubt, at least temporarily.

With the advent of an Islamist-led government in Turkey, Saddam also calculated that it would be difficult for the United States to get approval to use Turkish air bases for air strikes with the planes assigned to Operation Provide Comfort. Moreover, with the stalemate in the Arab-Israeli peace process, the climate in the Arab world for another confrontation with the United States appeared to be ripe. Growing frustration with the new Israeli government of Benjamin Netanyahu made pro-United States Arab regimes vulnerable to accusations from Arab opposition groups skeptical of the peace process and continued reliance on the United States.

### **. . . AND BARZANI, AN ALLIANCE**

Kurds, and Iraqi Kurds in particular, have always had to construct alliances with stronger outside powers to survive. Both Barzani and Talabani have in the past sought the support of leaders in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. Barzani himself in 1994 elicited Teheran's help when the tide had turned against the KDP. Nevertheless, Barzani's decision to align himself with Saddam against another well-established Kurdish formation took everyone by surprise. It was no secret that Barzani had been entertaining confidential contacts with the regime in Baghdad for some time. Never having envisioned a future for the Kurds separate from Baghdad, he had always been considered closer to the Iraqi regime there than Talabani. Also, deeply mistrustful of the United States, which had abandoned his father in 1975 as part of the Iranian-Iraqi agreement signed in Algiers, Barzani did not believe in Washington's commitment to the Kurds.

Although Barzani justified his decision by pointing out that the PUK had been receiving support from Iran, his gambit in aligning himself with Saddam was a risky venture—and remains so. The Barzani family was one of the primary victims of Saddam's 1988 anti-Kurd campaign; Barzani acknowledges that Saddam is responsible for the deaths of three of his brothers. Irrespective of their tribal or any other affiliation, Kurds universally fear and despise Saddam Hussein. Therefore, unless Barzani can demonstrate that concrete benefits will flow from this alliance, his tactical victory could turn into a strategic blunder. Already, the KDP and the PUK are back negotiating—although without much zeal—a cease-fire agreement under American

auspices and with Turkish help. These negotiations are, in effect, an admission by Barzani that he has failed to unite the territory under his leadership. It is quite possible that the next move in this conflict will be Saddam's, who may want to undermine American efforts.

### THE LARGER KURDISH QUESTION AND TURKEY

The dispersion of traditional Kurdish territories among at least four states—Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria—internationalizes the Kurdish conflict. In the past, neighboring powers were interested in the Iraqi Kurds either because they were intent on destabilizing the Baghdad regime or were afraid of the demonstration effect on their own Kurdish minorities. After almost six years of de facto autonomy, the question of the Kurds in northern Iraq is no longer a simple one, since the future of Iraq itself, including its territorial integrity, has been undermined by a variety of sanctions. Complicating matters is the Kurdish insurrection in Turkey, begun in 1984 by the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). The PKK has not only proven resilient against one of the Middle East's most powerful armies, but has become the third largest military force in northern Iraq after the KDP and the PUK.

In the 13 years since the PKK burst onto the scene, some 21,000 people have died, mostly in Turkey's southeastern Kurdish provinces. The manpower and resources the Ankara government has devoted to this conflict are enormous. Combating the insurrection itself costs approximately 3 percent of Turkey's GDP, and some 250,000 troops and other security forces have been pressed into service. The brutal conflict has led to the destruction of thousands of villages and hamlets and an internal flow of refugees.

In Iraq the Kurds have always enjoyed the simple recognition of belonging to a different ethnic group. The Iraqi government, admittedly because it was under severe pressure from a successful Kurdish resistance movement, agreed in the 1970s to an unfulfilled autonomy arrangement that provided a modicum of self-rule in the north. In contrast, Turkish Kurds, despite Turkey's pluralist political system, have only in the last few years—and then grudgingly—received acknowledgment of their identity. Even so, their existence is not an official fact.

When Turkey's new rulers after World War I tried to create a Turkish state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, they endeavored to assimilate the Kurdish minority into the larger Turkish population. This was in contrast to the Ottoman practice

that made no distinction between its Muslim populations; all were treated as first-class citizens. Kurds were offered a choice: to the extent that an individual Kurd accepted the "new Turkish identity," he or she would enjoy all the rights of full citizenship. In fact, many assimilated Kurds rose through the political, economic, and military ranks to occupy some of the highest positions in Turkish society.

Not all, however, wanted to assimilate. Those who wished to keep the Kurdish language alive and champion their distinct heritage were confronted by successive governments wielding uncompromising policies against any sign of ethnic consciousness. The calm that reigned over Turkey after 1937, when the last of the postindependence Kurdish rebellions was defeated, was shattered by violence in the 1970s that pitted left- and right-wing groups against each other. Kurds, who were mobilized by the radical discourse of left-wing revolutionary Turkish student groups, wholeheartedly embraced these organizations and often figured among their leaders. Dissatisfied with their Turkish counterparts' insufficient attention to the problems of eastern and southeastern Anatolia, the Kurds broke away to form their own organizations. The PKK ultimately emerged from this as a Marxist-nationalist grouping.

Three factors account for the PKK's success. The first is its textbook-style insurgency campaign that mixes brutality (especially toward Kurds considered collaborators) with a political campaign designed to politicize and then win over rural and migrant populations. The PKK has deliberately sought to create a heavy-handed response from the Turkish military which, in turn, has alienated the Kurds in the southeast. During the first stages of the insurrection, in the early 1980s, the local citizenry routinely denounced PKK members to the security forces, but by the second half of the decade loyalties were radically transformed.

Second, as much as the PKK casts its long shadow over northern Iraq today, the large influx of Iraqi Kurdish refugees into Turkey in 1987 and 1988 after Saddam's anti-Kurd campaign, and then again after the Gulf War, provided Turkish Kurds with a cause for which to mobilize. The PKK became an indirect beneficiary of this heightened ethnic awareness; Kurds were not immune to the ethnic liberalization that marked the end of the cold war.

The third factor was the PKK's ability to obtain support from Syria and diaspora Kurdish communities. Syria has long-standing disputes with Turkey, ranging from Alexandretta's accession into the Turk-



ish republic in 1939 to the mammoth Turkish irrigation and hydroelectric projects on the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers that adversely affect the quantity and quality of the downstream water flow. Furthermore, the 500,000-strong Kurdish diaspora in Europe, principally in Germany, has been mobilized by the PKK and provides the organization with a constant stream of financial and political support.

While the Turkish military has become more efficient at combating the PKK and has captured the initiative, it has not succeeded in eliminating it. Because the PKK cannot defeat the Turkish military, it measures its success by its ability to survive as a force that can damage and engage the army while simultaneously enlarging its political base among Turkish Kurds. Though it does not appeal to a majority of Turkey's Kurds, its presence has had two contradictory results. On the one hand, it is perceived by Kurds as an instrument of pressure on the Turkish government that keeps the issue alive. Therefore, even the most moderate of Kurdish nationalists do not wish to see the PKK defeated. On the other hand, the PKK's terror tactics have enabled the Turkish government to paint all Kurdish demands with the same brush of extremism.

### INTO THE "DANGER ZONE"

Ankara has increasingly found itself being dragged into the politics of the Middle East by the combination of overt Syrian and, to a lesser extent, Iranian support for the PKK and its reluctance to admit that the Kurdish problem is primarily one of identity, and therefore domestic in origin. With the PKK making liberal use of northern Iraq as a staging area, the Turkish military has intervened a number of times in an attempt to destroy PKK bases and provisions. The first large anti-PKK operation in the fall of 1992 was conducted in conjunction with both the KDP and the PUK. Since then, Ankara has preferred to rely on the KDP, primarily because this group's territory is adjacent to Turkey and also because it has found it more trustworthy than the PUK. By 1995, Ankara stopped relying on the Iraqi Kurdish parties altogether and in March and April 1995 conducted its largest operation to date with 35,000 troops.

Unable to prevent PKK incursions into Turkey, Ankara announced in 1996 that it would construct a 10-mile-wide "danger zone" south of the Turkish border that would be patrolled and extensively monitored by its own troops, although no Turkish troops would be permanently based there. Not surprisingly, Ankara found itself enmeshed in contro-

versy with Arab governments and public opinion, which accused it of imitating the Israeli security zone in south Lebanon.

### THE LESSER OF TWO EVILS?

Turkey has long adhered to the belief that the solution to northern Iraq and, indirectly, to its own Kurdish problem, lies in reconstituting a strong Iraq capable of maintaining the peace along the Turco-Iraqi border. In Ankara's view, even a stronger Saddam is preferable to the status quo, although there is concern about the Iraqi leader's future ambitions and even desire to seek revenge for Turkey's Gulf War posture. Ankara's preference has been a source of irritation between itself and the United States. Turkish fears of the PKK and suspicions of American intentions have interfered with Operation Provide Comfort and curtailed United States activities in northern Iraq. This has strengthened the hand of Damascus, Teheran, and Baghdad at the expense of Ankara and Washington. The Syrians have used the PKK to attack the KDP and force the latter to negotiate a cease-fire with Turkey's nemesis, while the Iranians have often offered to negotiate between the warring Kurdish parties as a way of weaning them away from United States influence. It is in this context that the KDP fell under the spell of Baghdad. These developments and the inability of the United States to use its Turkish-based airpower to respond have exposed the Kurds' vulnerability and seriously eroded Operation Provide Comfort's deterrence function and, therefore, its *raison d'être*.

Soon before he died in 1993, Turkish President Turgut Özal had finally come to the conclusion that the Kurdish problem on either side of his border with Iraq was unlikely to disappear anytime soon. Instead of forcing the Iraqi Kurds into Saddam's arms, he chose to cooperate with and strengthen them politically while simultaneously making them dependent on Ankara for their existence. They were also to become his opening with the Turkish Kurds. He had hoped to defuse the domestic Turkish issue by introducing a modicum of domestic reforms and by channeling Kurdish aspirations to northern Iraq. But his successors have abandoned his policies in favor of a purely military solution.

Meanwhile, on the ground, the hopes unleashed by the 1992 elections in northern Iraq and by the Kurdish government have been dashed. A great deal more, however, may be at stake if the latest United States-led mediation effort fails: the Kurdish issue will not disappear and may become a dominant factor in Middle East politics. ■

"Lebanon's independence is held hostage to the Middle East peace process. Whether the hostage will be released at the end of that process remains a central question."

## Lebanon: With Friends Like These. . .

AUGUSTUS RICHARD NORTON

Lebanon's 16 years of civil war came to an end in the fall of 1990 when, with silent approval from Washington, Syrian forces assaulted the presidential palace in Baabda and crushed the rebellion of General Michel Aoun. The general had resisted implementing the 1989 Taif accord, which he and his followers viewed as legitimizing Syria's occupation of Lebanon. Unfortunately, since the end of Aoun's rebellion and more than seven years after the accord he resisted was signed in Taif, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon is still wracked by problems as the larger Arab-Israeli conflict continues to play itself out on Lebanese soil.

On the positive side, most of the civil war's debris has been carted away and Lebanon's landscape of destruction is being transformed. Even in the south, where the Israeli occupation zone continues to be a magnet for resistance attacks, the pace of construction is impressive. The potential for Lebanon to rebound economically is also reflected in international financial markets. Two Lebanese offerings on the Eurobond market in July 1995 and May 1996 were snapped up by investors. The result is that Lebanon has been able to capitalize its postwar rebuilding of infrastructure with deficit financing. The plans are ambitious, and include state-of-the-art telecommunications, a world-class airport, and extensive renovation of port facilities in Beirut and Sidon. The reconstruction project, called Horizon 2000, has cost three-quarters of a billion dollars annually since 1993, and is projected to cost a billion dollars a year through 2001, large expenditures in a country of 3 million citizens.

In Beirut, the commercial center of the city is

being rebuilt in a mammoth project by Solidere, a private company created for this purpose in 1993. The rebuilding, which has been called the most ambitious construction project in the world, is the brainchild of billionaire Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Hariri not only stands to leave a magnificent legacy in Beirut but, as a major stockholder in Solidere, he will also see his personal fortune grow. As a result, Lebanese commonly complain that their prime minister acts as though he were a CEO and Lebanon his company.

Although the conspicuous consumption of some well-to-do Lebanese masks the problem, the domestic economy has grown only modestly since 1990. The General Confederation of Lebanese Workers, the umbrella organization for most of Lebanon's unions, has mounted several nationwide strikes to protest low wages and the galloping rise in the cost of living, most notably in 1992, when labor protests precipitated the fall of the government of Prime Minister Omar Karami, and again in 1995, when the confederation defied a government ban and organized protests against large increases in gasoline prices.

Many members of the middle class have been able to stave off a deep decline in their standard of living by selling their real estate and other fixed assets. In fact, there has been a large flow of the middle class out of Lebanon, seeking opportunity elsewhere. The emigration flood has been especially heavy among the Maronites and other Christians, so much so that the Christian communities are now estimated to account for a third or less of Lebanon's total population. The brain drain has been propelled not only by a quest for the good life, but also by ominous limitations on personal freedom, including government election-tampering and a growing intolerance for dissent.

As Michel Aoun and his supporters feared, Syria's influence on Lebanon has grown tremendously

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since the late 1980s. Few political decisions are made without consulting Damascus. These decisions are tailored to suit the preferences of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad and his lieutenants, and no action is taken that has even the remote likelihood of offending Damascus. Lebanon has tied its destiny to Syria in the peace process and, since 1993, President Elias Hrawi has repeatedly emphasized that there will be continued cooperation between the two countries. While many Lebanese privately express distaste for Lebanon's cheek by jowl relationship with Syria, others argue that the country has little choice. Were Lebanon to try to act independent of Syria's wishes, it would not only provoke Syria, but it would leave Lebanon in a weaker position with Israel. And after their own unhappy attempts to shape events in Lebanon during the 1980s, both Israel and the United States have been content to let Syria call the shots in Lebanon.

## PARLIAMENTARY RESHAPING

With the end of the civil war, parliamentary elections resumed in Lebanon in 1992 after a 20-year hiatus. Ordinarily, the resumption of elections would be an occasion for celebration, but the 1992 election law was ramrodded through parliament and protections provided for in the Taif agreement, including a Constitutional Council, were not implemented before the August election date. Given the short time available to confirm lists of voters and otherwise monitor the conduct of the election, many Lebanese viewed the 1992 balloting as a ploy by Syria to increase its control over Beirut. By ensuring the election of a majority of pro-Syrian parliamentary deputies, Syria could avoid the inconvenience of a recalcitrant legislature that might insist on the enforcement of the Taif accord. (The agreement required Syria to withdraw its 40,000 soldiers to positions in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley two years after the accord's implementation—that is, by September 1992—but this aspect of the agreement was suspended by the Lebanese parliament.)

Sensing a fixed election, many Lebanese, especially the Christian community, mounted an electoral boycott. As a result, in several areas fewer than 5 percent of eligible Christians voted and no area had an overall participation rate higher than 37 percent. In one district, Jubayl, only 1 Christian vote

was cast for every 200 eligible Christian voters. Although the rates of participation among the Muslims were higher, they were still well below those customarily seen.

The most authentic result of the 1992 elections was in the Shiite Muslim community, where a number of the traditional political bosses were shunted aside by the voters in favor of candidates from Hezbollah (the Party of God) and Amal (the Shiite reformist movement).<sup>1</sup> Although Shiite Muslims account for at least one-third of Lebanon's population and are the largest single confessional group in the country, they have been habitually impoverished and poorly represented in government. In many ways, the long process of politicization and mobilization among the Shia that began in the 1950s and culminated in the 1990s has been the central challenge facing Lebanon. Now, after generations of marginalization, the Shia found themselves in the halls of parliament.

Counting victories by its non-Shiite allies, Hezbollah won a total of 12 seats in the 1992 elections, making it the largest bloc in parliament. Hezbollah, of course, gained notoriety and international opprobrium in the 1980s for its complicity in the kidnapping of foreigners and the devastating 1983 attacks on French soldiers and American marines deployed in Beirut as part of a multinational peacekeeping force. More than 280 American and French servicemen were killed when bomb-laden trucks were driven into their positions. But the 1992 election seemed to mark the beginning of a period of transition as Hezbollah sought to recreate itself as a political party.

As the 1996 parliamentary elections approached, a new electoral law was passed in July 1996. Like the previous law, this one ignored key provisions of the Taif accord and stipulated that elections in Mount Lebanon, one of Lebanon's five provinces and the center of opposition to the government, would be organized on the basis of *caza*, or district. The transparent purpose was to ensure the election of government supporters and to fragment the opposition. Although there was some grumbling in parliament, the new law was dutifully passed and it was announced that elections would begin in August (elections are conducted during five succeeding weeks, in one province after another). As in 1992, the elections were to begin in Mount Lebanon, apparently to give the opposition as little time as possible to prepare.

Some well-known personalities called for a boycott of the elections, including General Michel

<sup>1</sup>For a discussion of the emergence of these Shiite groups, see Augustus Richard Norton, "Estrangement and Fragmentation in Lebanon," *Current History*, February 1986.

Aoun; Dory Chamoun, son of a former president; Raymond Eddé, the aging but respected head of the National Bloc Party; and former President Amin Gemayel. But even leading participants in the 1992 boycott argued against a repeat. Albert Mukhaibar, a well-regarded Greek Orthodox opposition figure who was a stalwart of the earlier boycott, argued that a boycott would be counterproductive and announced that he would stand for elections. (Ironically, Mukhaibar later lost his bid for a seat.) For its part, the United States embassy in Beirut urged broad participation in the elections. The United States enthusiasm for elections provoked cynicism among many informed Lebanese, who anticipated that the voting would be anything but fair.

Parliamentary elections in Lebanon are organized using a unique list system, which invites deal making and complicated alliances. Although parliamentary seats are allocated on a confessional basis, voters cast a ballot for every empty seat in their voting district. Thus, in the North province, which accounts for 28 seats in parliament, voters elect 9 Maronite, 2 Alawite, 6 Greek Orthodox, and 11 Sunni members of parliament. Prominent candidates seek to organize coalitions and often try to persuade their supporters to vote for every member in the electoral coalition. However, voters routinely split their ballots, crossing out candidates and writing in more popular candidates from other lists or even independents. As a result, pre-election coalitions sometimes backfire.

While voting irregularities varied, reliable reports indicate that a systematic pattern of tampering by the government occurred. Voter lists were often incomplete and inaccurate; newly naturalized citizens were instructed to vote for the government-approved list (and did so for fear of losing their coveted identity cards); ballot boxes were stuffed to prevent some embarrassing defeats (apparently including that of Foreign Minister Faris Buwayiz); and voters were sometimes denied the right to cast a secret ballot.

The result was a resounding, if tainted, government victory. In Beirut, Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri, who headed his own list, captured 14 of 19 seats, and only two opposition candidates won seats. The results in Beirut were indicative of the pattern throughout the country. Opposition candidates managed to capture a few seats, but the lion's share of the 128 seats remained firmly in the government's

and Syria's corner. This means that Lebanon will continue to acquiesce to Syria.

As noted earlier, one of the most dramatic aspects of the 1992 elections was the entry of Hezbollah into Lebanese parliamentary politics. Of 27 seats assigned to Shiite Muslims, Hezbollah won 8 in 1992, but the Hezbollah candidates were undoubtedly assisted by the Christian boycott. Were they not boycotting, many Christian voters most likely would have cast their ballots against Hezbollah.

Contrary to the anxious concerns of some Lebanese and some Western officials, Hezbollah performed responsibly in parliament after the 1992 election. In fact, the party's deputies proved to be just as pragmatic as their secular colleagues, and often brokered deals and built parliamentary alliances to promote legislation. In this sense, and as a number of leading Lebanese politicians emphasized in private interviews in 1995 and 1996, the entry of Hezbollah into parliament is a success

story, further proof that participation in the political game tends to moderate radical players. Muhammad Raad, president of Hezbollah's Political Council, told this author in 1996 that despite its earlier rejection of any participation in Lebanese political institutions, Hezbollah had come to the conclusion that the Taif accord changed the structure of the system so that constructive participation is

now possible.

Nonetheless, Hezbollah faced strong competition in the 1996 elections. The party's campaign stressed Hezbollah's role in resisting Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon. One ubiquitous poster in West Beirut, which referred to the leading role played by Hezbollah fighters in the resistance, read: "They resist with their blood, resist with your vote." Thanks to its record of clean, noncorrupt politics, Hezbollah has a broad base of support among the Shiite Muslims, especially in the southern suburbs of Beirut. But even if its candidates can count on a heavy vote from fellow Shia, the mixed-list system often gives the final word to non-Shiite voters, who may choose to support rival Shiite candidates.

In addition, Prime Minister Hariri and his colleagues in Syria seemed intent on ensuring that Hezbollah did not expand its role in the political system, and there are widespread stories of strong-arm manipulation to ensure that end. There may have been a meeting of minds between the Lebanese government, the Syrians, and United

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*Since 1991, Syria  
has enveloped  
Lebanon  
politically and  
diplomatically.*

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States officials. Of the 27 Shiite deputies, only 7 of those elected in 1996 were from Hezbollah. Success in the Lebanese electoral system requires candidates to seek alliances, given the need for electoral support across confessional lines. Hezbollah candidates did not fare well in areas where the Shiite Muslims comprise a minority. Non-Shiite voters preferred to cast their ballots for more moderate candidates. Moreover, Nabih Berri, the speaker of parliament and head of the rival Amal movement, is in a position to dispense vast patronage, and he is also supported by Syria. Thus, including his own seat, 11 of the successful Shiite candidates were allies of Berri.

### READING SYRIAN TEA LEAVES

The presidential term in Lebanon is six years and incumbents are constitutionally prohibited from succeeding themselves. Although the prerogatives of the president were reduced in the Taif agreement, the position continues to be preserved for a Maronite. Before Taif the presidency was the strongest political position in Lebanon, but it is now checked by the prime minister, a Sunni Muslim, and the speaker of the parliament, a Shiite Muslim. In effect, the top leadership has become a troika of presidents: the president of the republic, the president of the cabinet, and the president of the parliament.

In the autumn of 1995, an election was scheduled to replace President Elias Hrawi. Hrawi had been elected in 1989, following the assassination of President René Moawad, who was killed three weeks after his election. Among the troika members, Hrawi's public profile was by far the lowest. Hrawi maintains friendly ties with Syria, and Syria was clearly content with his presidential style, as was Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri. Thus, despite the constitutional prohibition, the parliament voted on October 19, 1995, to extend Hrawi's term of office for three years. Speaker Nabih Berri put aside his declared opposition and lent his support to the extraordinary measure. Syria subtly signaled its preference, but Lebanese politicians strain hard to read Syrian signals and are willing, as in this case, to contort and even ignore Lebanese laws to please their Syrian brothers.

Of the 128 members of parliament, only 11 were willing to oppose the extension of Hrawi's term, which now expires in 1998. But resisting the interpreted will of Damascus has its costs. Of the 11 who

voted against the extension, only 6 managed to win reelection in 1996.

As this example illustrates, while some restructuring of the political system has occurred, there is little prospect for comprehensive political reforms while power remains in the grip of a coterie of politicians on good terms with Damascus. Instead, the government operates like a giant patronage machine, enabling newly entrenched political bosses to create networks of clients and grow richer on sweetheart deals. In September 1996, for example, the government decided to reduce the number of authorized television stations to four. On the face of it, the decision was sensible, since a crazy-quilt of stations had emerged during the war, most associated with one militia group or another. The details tell a different story. The four authorized stations are owned by the prime minister, the speaker of the parliament, the interior minister, and a wealthy businessman in partnership with the grandson of a former president. Not only are the stations important sources of advertising revenue, but the government seems intent on controlling the political coverage offered by television, just as it has sometimes sought to intimidate and control the stubbornly outspoken print media. When Syria evidently expressed disapproval that the government's decision affected al-Manar, the Hezbollah television station, the station was allowed to resume broadcasting on October 2.<sup>2</sup>

### ABOUT THOSE FRIENDS. . .

Since 1991, Syria has enveloped Lebanon politically and diplomatically. A web of agreements and pacts now links the two countries and serves to legitimate Syrian meddling in Lebanese affairs. These range from a Treaty of Brotherhood, Cooperation, and Coordination and a Pact on Defense and Security, both signed in 1991, to bilateral agreements on agriculture, social, and economic affairs, health, and the movement of individuals and goods that were signed in 1993. The common denominator is that each agreement has served to bring Lebanon further into Syria's embrace.

Lebanon, like Syria, attended the Madrid peace conference in 1991, and with the exception of a brief period in 1993, Beirut has followed the lead of Damascus in negotiations with Israel. Syria has refused to participate in the multilateral negotiations, launched under United States and Russian sponsorship in Moscow in January 1992. Syria's Assad has argued that the multilateral talks, which deal with the environment, economic development,

<sup>2</sup>For more details see *The Lebanon Report*, no. 3 (Fall 1996), pp. 8-10.



security, water, and refugees, lend legitimacy to Israel, conferring the prizes of peace before Israel has earned them by withdrawing from occupied Arab territory. Lebanon has followed the Syrian lead scrupulously, despite the fact that one of the most pressing issues confronting Lebanon is the fate of the 340,000 Palestinian refugees living within its borders. Arguably, it would serve Lebanon's interests at least to participate in the multilateral talks on the refugee question, especially since the government has emphatically declared that it opposes "normalizing" the refugees and integrating them into Lebanese society.

Early in his tenure as prime minister, Hariri outlined the parameters for negotiations with Israel. Lebanon was willing, he declared in February 1993, to sign any agreement with Israel, short of a peace treaty, based on UN Security Council Resolution 425, which calls for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon. He rejected any linkage with Resolutions 242 and 338, which deal with the Arab-Israeli conflict and the principle of land for peace, since the occupation of southern Lebanon by Israel is unequivocally rejected in Resolution 425 (unlike Resolutions 242 and 338, there is no suggestion in 425 of a principle of territorial adjustment). He also said he would not wait for progress by other parties negotiating with Israel. Hariri's independent position did not survive the spring and by October 1993 Lebanon announced a policy of "total coordination" with Syria.

Diplomatically, Lebanon has been relatively isolated since 1993, when it became clear that Beirut had tied its fate to Syria in the peace process. In Washington it became increasingly common for officials to presume that Lebanon's zip code was the same as Syria's. The United States has continued to emphasize its commitment to the territorial integrity of the country, to the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanese soil, and to the reestablishment of peace and security. Nonetheless, United States Middle East policy under President Bill Clinton has been remarkably partial to Israeli perspectives, especially those on southern Lebanon, where Washington has often offered unconditional support for Israel's

actions. This was clearly demonstrated in April 1996 during Israel's "Grapes of Wrath" military operation in Lebanon. Despite the fact that Israel's continuing presence in the south is in clear violation of Resolution 425, which the United States sponsored in 1978, President Clinton accepted Israel's assertions that the operation had been undertaken only to protect Israel's own security, and took no action except to emphasize American support of Israel.

Some United States policies have served to isolate Lebanon and have further nudged Lebanon into Syria's court, none more so than the passport ban. Since 1985, when hijackers sympathetic to Hezbollah took over a TWA airliner in Beirut and killed an American sailor who was a passenger, American citizens have been prohibited from using their passports to travel to Lebanon. Still, more than 40,000 United States citizens have traveled to Lebanon, either using a Lebanese passport, in the case of some Lebanese-Americans, or simply by securing a

Lebanese visa on a piece of paper that substitutes for a passport.

The United States has refused to lift the ban, despite persistent Lebanese requests, citing continuing but undisclosed dangers in Lebanon.<sup>3</sup> Those dangers are emphasized on the scene by United States diplomats, who travel only in heavily armored convoys accompanied by their own SWAT teams or "Ninjas," as the Lebanese call them. The continuation of the passport ban dampens investment in Lebanon, especially by United States businessmen.

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*[M]any Lebanese believe that a reduction in pressure will not induce Israel to leave, but to stay.*

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## THE BLEEDING SOUTH

Israel's involvement in southern Lebanon began with the start of the civil war in 1975. It has sought to cultivate and fortify local allies who, in return for Israeli support, would assist in securing Israel's northern border. Since 1985 this policy has taken the form of the self-declared Israeli "security zone" in southern Lebanon, an area that comprises about 10 percent of Lebanon's territory. From the perspective of many observers, as well as the Lebanese government, the security zone is little more than a euphemism for occupation, a position that is buttressed by UN Resolution 425. Israel, for its part, argues that its only objective is security, that it does not have territorial ambitions in Lebanon, and that it will withdraw provided satisfactory security arrangements are made.

Since 1993, the question of the south has been subsumed by the Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

<sup>3</sup>Outside the occupied south, the physical dangers confronting a traveler are far more extreme in many other countries and regions, including Russia, Latin America, and Africa; there has not been an act of political violence against a Westerner in Lebanon since the 1980s.

It is presumed by Washington, Tel Aviv, Damascus, and Beirut that an Israeli-Syrian agreement will not only deal with the fate of the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights but the security zone as well. Attempts by Lebanon to negotiate directly with Israel, especially in 1983 and, a decade later, in 1993, have foundered on Syrian objections to separate negotiations, which would isolate Syria.

For more than a decade a deadly war of resistance to the Israeli occupation has been fought by Lebanese, and especially by Iranian-backed Hezbollah guerrillas, who are the dominant force in the self-styled "Islamic Resistance." Attacks occur almost daily, and all sides have suffered losses.

Over time clear—but unstable—rules of the game emerged between the resistance forces and the Israelis and their proxy militia, the Southern Lebanon Army, or SLA. Israel would refrain from attacking civilian targets in Lebanon, while the resistance would focus its actions on the security zone. This *modus vivendi* was formalized as an oral agreement in 1993. Nonetheless, the 1993 agreement only temporarily reduces the intensity of violence and counterviolence. In April 1996, after Hezbollah fired Katyusha rockets into Israel in retaliation for the killing of Lebanese civilians, the Israeli military launched yet another major campaign in Lebanon. Operation Grapes of Wrath was intended to undermine popular support for Hezbollah and prompt Syria to rein in the group. The strategy failed, largely as a result of an Israeli artillery attack on a UN base in southern Lebanon that killed scores of civilians seeking refuge from Israeli air and ground attacks. As CNN broadcast pictures of mangled and burned civilians, United States diplomacy swung into action. United States Secretary of State Warren Christopher succeeded in gaining the acceptance by all sides to the same rules that had been orally accepted in 1993. This time the agreement was committed to an unsigned piece of paper.

The April understanding specified that armed groups will not be allowed to launch attacks against Israeli territory; that Israel and its allies will not

bombard civilians or civilian targets; that both sides will avoid attacks on civilians and also not launch attacks from civilian areas; and that nothing in the agreement prevents the right to self-defense. The agreement also provided for a monitoring group composed of the United States, France, Lebanon, Syria, and Israel to oversee the implementation of the agreement and to receive complaints of violations, and for a consultative group, including France, the United States, the European Union, and Russia, to help Lebanon in its reconstruction efforts. It is noteworthy that while Israel asserts that it is not an occupying force, it has tacitly accepted the right of the Lebanese to attack Israeli soldiers on Lebanese soil under the "self-defense" provision.

Of course, the rules of the game will inevitably be violated. Both sides have blatantly disregarded time-honored principles of noncombatant immunity and proportionality.<sup>4</sup> Resistance attacks spark Israeli reprisals, which lead to civilian deaths simply because Israel's standards for discriminate retaliation are sometimes quite loose, especially after a few Israeli soldiers have been killed. In addition, on a day-to-day basis, Israeli forces often adopt a shoot first, ask questions later policy, which makes daily life risky for those who live in the shadow of the security zone; civilians are regularly killed "by accident" and in greater cumulative numbers than are members of the resistance, the Israeli military, or the SLA.

Over the course of the Israeli occupation of south Lebanon there have been relatively few civilians killed in Israel by fire from Lebanon. Since 1982, 12 Israeli civilians have been killed as a result of attacks launched from the south, and since 1993 only 3 have died. These deaths are regrettable, but they are modest when compared with the toll in Lebanese civilians. Lebanese civilian deaths incurred during Israel's 1993 and 1996 invasions total nearly 300, including the 103 or 104 people massacred in the Israeli shelling of the UN base in Qana in April 1996.<sup>5</sup> In the period between Operation Accountability in 1993 and Operation Grapes of Wrath in 1996, 45 Lebanese civilians were killed by the Israelis or their allies.

The logic of Israel's "iron fist" is to punish Lebanese civilians disproportionately for the Israeli military's inability to prevent attacks on its own soldiers as well as for the retaliatory firing of Katyusha rockets at Israel. Israeli strategists assume that by imposing an awesome burden on the Lebanese—as in April 1996, when 400,000 people were roused from their homes and given a few hours to flee on

<sup>4</sup>A recent and carefully researched study by Human Rights Watch is essential for understanding events in southern Lebanon. See *Civilian Pawns: Laws of War Violations and the Use of Weapons on the Israel-Lebanon Border* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1996).

<sup>5</sup>A report by the UN secretary general's military adviser argues that Israel probably fired on the UN camp at Qana intentionally and with disregard for the lives of the civilians housed there. See Security Council document S/1996/137. A report by Amnesty International reached similar conclusions.

threat of bombardment—support for the resistance will wither. This is a clear strategic miscalculation reflecting an inability to understand that the attacks on the security zone are widely popular because many Lebanese believe that a reduction in pressure will not induce Israel to leave, but to stay.

Washington and Tel Aviv call regularly for the disarming of Hezbollah, and Israel has made the defanging of Hezbollah a precondition for withdrawal, as though it is merely a collection of fanatical gunmen directed by Iran and manipulated by Syria. In effect, Israel and its friends in Washington often assume that Hezbollah is a mirror image of the SLA, namely, an easily manipulated and completely dependent proxy force. This is a flawed image. Hezbollah's role in the resistance has won it support especially among the Shia of the Beirut suburbs, whose roots are usually in the south; moreover, Hezbollah looks more and more like an efficient political party.

Although Hezbollah refuses to engage in direct negotiations with Israel, which it routinely excoriates in brutal language, it has negotiated indirectly with Israel. It did so most recently in July 1996 when, through German mediators, Israel and Hezbollah agreed to the exchange of the remains of their fallen fighters. A small step, obviously, but these discussions may have opened a useful channel for further dialogue. Hezbollah has maintained a position of calculated ambiguity in terms of what it will do should Israel actually withdraw from the south. While it is widely believed in Lebanon that the violence against Israel would then stop, Hezbollah has avoided saying so directly. In this respect, its calculated ambiguity makes it far easier for Israel to justify staying than leaving.

In fact, if Israel withdraws from the south, it will be a relatively simple matter for the Lebanese army to disarm Hezbollah, because its *raison d'être* is not limited to bullets and bombs. Conversely, without an Israeli withdrawal, Hezbollah has broad support for refusing to put down its weapons. As for Hezbollah's external friends, Iran and Syria, they have no incentive to end the resistance. For Iran, Israel is anathema, and for Syria, Hezbollah's pressure on Israel serves an instrumental purpose: namely it raises Syria's value as a negotiating partner and increases the likelihood that Syrian suzerainty in Lebanon will be formally recognized to the disadvantage of the Lebanese.

In July 1996, responding to pressure from the

Israeli military, which has begun to question the tenability of the Israeli position in Lebanon—especially after the criticism that followed the Qana massacre—and in a patent attempt to send a message to Syria, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu released a trial balloon to test the idea of a "Lebanon first" option. Rather than considering the question of the south as an adjunct to broader negotiations with Syria, Netanyahu proposed the idea of an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in return for appropriate security arrangements, including the disarming of Hezbollah. From Israel's perspective, the idea has a lot to recommend it. First, and perhaps primarily, it might relieve the pressure on Israel from the United States to make concessions in other realms of the peace process, namely in the remaining occupied areas of the West Bank. An equally enticing prospect was the possibility that by leaving southern Lebanon, Israel would be eliminating Syria's trump card. Predictably, Syria rejected the proposal, arguing that Damascus holds the key to peace in south Lebanon. The Lebanese obediently followed suit, citing the proposal as a ploy intended to weaken Syria and therefore Lebanon. When all was said and done, Netanyahu's proposal may have been good public relations, but it did little more than underline that Israeli-Syrian negotiations are the only game in town.

## POLITICAL CODEPENDENCE

Lebanon's fate awaits the outcome of the peace process. The country's senior politicians have shown no enthusiasm for staking out an independent path and have resigned themselves to following the Syrian lead. Israel has been content to accept Syria as its main interlocutor for matters Lebanese, and the United States, while maintaining diplomatic representation in Beirut, has also presumed that the Lebanese are not masters of their own fate. Threatening troop movements by the Israeli, Lebanese, and Syrian armies in October 1996 served to highlight the stakes in the peace process for all concerned parties, although the maneuvers were clearly moves on the diplomatic chessboard as the players repositioned themselves for the next stage in negotiations.

The subordination of Lebanese politics to Syrian interests is for now a fact. Lebanon's independence is held hostage to the Middle East peace process. Whether the hostage will be released at the end of that process remains a central question. ■



As the Persian Gulf War fades into memory, a revisionist reading of the war's aims and strategy has gained critical favor among those who see it as having been the last best hope for relieving the Middle East of Saddam Hussein. In response to this reinterpretation, Michael Sterner examines whether "there is anything the coalition did not do militarily that could have changed the political outcome of the war. To answer that we need to look not only at what coalition forces might have done, but at what the impact of those actions would likely have been in Iraq."

## Closing the Gate: The Persian Gulf War Revisited

MICHAEL STERNER

As soon as it became apparent that the Persian Gulf War had not resulted in the ouster of Saddam Hussein, a host of articles, books, and other commentary began to appear second-guessing American war aims and Washington's decision to bring the war to an end. At the very least—so the argument went—the Bush administration had ended the war prematurely, allowing significant Iraqi forces to escape, which Saddam was then able to use to suppress the Shiite and Kurdish uprisings. Some critics faulted Washington's war goals from the outset, saying it should have pressed the war to the point of unconditional Iraqi surrender, or at least have occupied Iraqi territory to impose much tougher terms on Baghdad.

All this commentary has been generated by the disparity between one of the most complete battlefield victories in military history and the problematic political results that have been the war's legacy. Six years after the war's end, Saddam's repressive regime is still in power; the contest of wills between the Iraqi leader and the coalition victors has not ended but has merely been transferred to the UN Security Council; regional security has been only half achieved, requiring the United States to maintain large forces for rapid deployment to the Gulf; and Washington is faced with the dilemma that economic sanctions are hurting the Iraqi people more than Saddam's regime. It is not surprising that so

many have rushed in to explain this discordant result.

Much of the commentary is more a *cri de coeur* than a systematic analysis. *New York Times* columnist William Safire declared on January 13, 1992, that George Bush had "snatched defeat from the jaws of victory." In a January 9, 1996, interview on the PBS program *Frontline*, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher came up with the epigrammatic but hardly profound comment that "There is the aggressor, Saddam Hussein, still in power. There is the president of the United States, no longer in power. I wonder who won?" Even as good an analyst as Jeffrey Record clearly goes over the top when he says in his 1993 book, *Hollow Victory*, that the Gulf War "was a magnificent military victory barren of any significant diplomatic gains."

The initial postwar debate has been revived recently by the publication in 1995 of *The General's War*, by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, and by the 1995 memoirs of former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Colin Powell and Arab Forces commander General Khaled bin Sultan. Gordon, a *New York Times* correspondent, and Trainor, a retired Marine general now at Harvard, offer one of the best accounts of the war. They do not waste time on the we-should-have-marched-to-Baghdad argument—recognizing that this option was never in the cards—but make two judgments that deserve serious consideration: that the United States ended the war too soon, allowing much of the Iraqi Republican Guard to escape with its heavy equipment; and that, as they noted in a February 1, 1995, *Charlie Rose Show* interview on PBS, American will-

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ingness to withdraw unconditionally from Iraqi territory deprived the United States of "the opportunity to create the conditions to overthrow Saddam Hussein."

Yet Gordon and Trainor, along with most other critics of the way the war ended, rather breezily leave it at that, failing to explain how, in bringing the war to an "optimal" military close, conditions would have been created that would have led to the overthrow of Saddam. The crucial question is whether there is anything the coalition did not do militarily that could have changed the political outcome of the war. To answer that we need to look not only at what coalition forces might have done, but at what the impact of those actions would likely have been in Iraq.

### SETTING WAR AIMS

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on the morning of August 2, 1990, took Arab and Western governments by surprise. The first concern in Western capitals was to erect a defense of Saudi Arabia against a possible continuation of Iraq's move southward. But on the day of the invasion, the UN Security Council condemned Iraq's action and demanded its unconditional withdrawal; this immediately raised the question of what the United States, as Western leader, would do to put teeth into this resolution. Pondering this, President Bush proceeded to Aspen, Colorado, for a previously scheduled conference, where he met with British Prime Minister Thatcher. Thatcher urged a tough response, but as she herself records, found Bush already disposed to be very firm.

In this respect the president appears to have been well out ahead of some of his senior advisers. Colin Powell records in *My American Journey* surprise and admiration at how quickly Bush made up his mind that Iraq would have to be ejected from Kuwait, whatever it took.<sup>1</sup> On August 5, Bush told reporters that "this will not stand, this aggression . . ." Three

days later, in an address to the nation, the president set forth American objectives: 1) the immediate, complete, and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait; 2) the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government; 3) the security and stability of Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf; and 4) the safety and protection of Americans abroad.

Achieving the third objective could reasonably be supposed to require the destruction of Iraq's war-making capability over and above Iraq's eviction from Kuwait; nevertheless, it is notable that the statement did not contain a call for Saddam Hussein's replacement, or any other intervention in Iraqi internal affairs. This program of clearly defined and limited goals remained remarkably constant throughout the following months. Richard Haass, the administration's Middle East adviser on the National Security Council, said in a June 10, 1996, interview with this author that while it became tactically necessary for coalition forces to invade Iraqi territory to carry out a war plan that ensured Iraq's overwhelming military defeat, this did not change the political strategy. "The elimination of Saddam was a war hope but never a war aim." In his memoir, Colin Powell says that "In none of the meetings I attended was dismembering Iraq, conquering Baghdad, or changing the form of government ever seriously considered. We hoped that Saddam would not survive the coming fury. But his elimination was not a stated objective. What we hoped for, frankly, in a post-war Gulf region, was an Iraq still standing, with Saddam overthrown."

In public comments before, during, and after the war, Bush expressed the hope that the Iraqi people would overthrow Saddam Hussein, but this never became a United States policy objective. Powell, among others, regretted the tendency on the part of the president to personalize American war aims, and worried—correctly as it turned out—that it would raise expectations that might prove impossible to fulfill.

Several factors combined to solidify the decision to keep United States war aims carefully limited. Extending the war to include political objectives in Iraq would have been vigorously opposed by all of the Arab coalition members and most of the European members as well.<sup>2</sup> American policymakers were also aware that intervention in Iraq would have radically altered Arab public opinion about the conflict. Expelling Iraq from Kuwait had the support of a significant segment of the Arab public that would have turned against the United States had there been an attempt to invade Iraq with the purpose of installing a new government. Moreover,

<sup>1</sup>Powell was initially very cautious about setting forth objectives that might require the use of United States military force when it was unclear whether there would be public support for it. He is quoted by Gordon and Trainor in *The General's War* as saying, at a meeting with Defense Secretary Dick Cheney on August 2, "I don't see the senior leadership taking us into armed conflict for the events of the last twenty-four hours. The American people don't want their young dying for \$1.50 gallon [sic] oil . . ."

<sup>2</sup>In his memoir, *Desert Warrior*, General Khaled bin Sultan says, "The Syrians told me very clearly, and the Egyptians somewhat more tactfully, that they could not consider entering Iraq, nor indeed could any Arab troops including our own."

American sponsorship would have been a long-term political liability for a new Iraqi government.

Certainly the most compelling reason to avoid intervention in Iraqi internal affairs would have been the profoundly altered nature of the mission undertaken by the United States. Instead of a mission that could have had a clear ending (the expulsion of the Iraqis from Kuwait), the United States would have undertaken one that would have required the invasion and occupation of Iraq. This held excellent prospects of bogging down American forces for an indefinite period, without any assurance that the end result would not be a splintering of Iraq along ethnic and religious lines—which was not perceived as being in the United States interest. There would also have been the problem of seeking congressional support for a wider war; it must be remembered that the Senate approved military action for even the administration's limited war objectives by a margin of only a few votes. From the numerous memoirs and interviews since the war, it is apparent that senior United States policymakers from the president on down were aware of these considerations, and that they found them compelling.

### THE 100-HOUR WAR'S END

The ground war strategy that General Norman Schwarzkopf and his planners devised called for a thrust directly north from Saudi Arabia by United States Marines and Arab forces that would “fix” the Iraqi forces in Kuwait in battle, while two United States army corps, including British and French divisions, swung far to the west and north through Iraqi territory to cut off the Iraqi lines of retreat and engage Iraq's Republican Guard divisions, which were positioned just north of the Iraq-Kuwait border. The only flaw in this outstandingly successful plan was that progress in the eastern sector was so rapid that it exposed the flank of the advancing forces, causing Schwarzkopf to push forward the launching of the two western corps by nearly 24 hours. Then, as the conflict turned into an Iraqi rout, it was feared the “left hook” would not arrive in time to engage the Republican Guard divisions before most of them had been withdrawn northward across the Euphrates River.

Even so, after the four days of fighting between February 24 and 27, 1991, the results were overwhelmingly impressive: Kuwait City had been liberated; most of the Iraqi divisions in Kuwait had been overrun with minimal resistance; some 82,000

Iraqi soldiers had been captured; in tank battles on February 26 and 27, several of the Iraqi Republican Guard heavy divisions had been badly mauled; and United States forces were astride the main road between Basra and Baghdad, and within 25 miles of Basra itself. All this had been accomplished with an almost miraculously low allied casualty rate (260 killed, of whom 146 were American).

Although postwar interviews and memoirs have tossed the ball back and forth as to who was most anxious to end the fighting, there is no basic disagreement among the participants about how the decision was reached. According to Schwarzkopf's account, he received a call mid-afternoon February 27 from Powell, who said it was time to give thought to a cease-fire, adding that people at home were beginning to be upset by reports of unnecessary slaughter of fleeing Iraqi troops along Kuwait's “Highway of Death.” (That day's *Washington Post*, for example, had carried a story with the headline, “‘Like Shooting Fish in a Barrel,’ US Pilots Say.”)

Schwarzkopf says he told Powell he would like to have another day to finish the job. “The five-day war. How's that sound?”

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*“The  
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At 9 P.M. in Riyadh (1 P.M. EST), Schwarzkopf gave a briefing to reporters at which he said the coalition's objectives had basically been achieved. He claimed 29 Iraqi divisions had been rendered completely ineffective and, pointing to a map where the remaining Iraqi forces south of

the Euphrates were located, said, “The gates are closed. There is no way out of here.” Pressed on this by a reporter, Schwarzkopf said he did not mean that no one was escaping, but that the gate was closed on Iraq's “military machine.”

In Washington, shortly after Schwarzkopf's briefing, a meeting of Bush and his senior advisers on the war was convened. Powell told the group about the battlefield results. There was general agreement that the war's objectives had largely been achieved, and concern was expressed that the war not be pursued to the point of needless slaughter. Powell expressed the view that the time was coming to end the war. According to Powell's account, he suggested “tomorrow” and the president said, “Why not today?” A call was placed to Schwarzkopf in Riyadh. Powell told him the president was thinking of going on the air at 9 P.M. EST (5 A.M. Riyadh time) to announce a suspension of hostilities, and asked if he had any problem with that. Schwarzkopf, after some thought, said he had none, but wanted to check with his commanders.



He did so, and reports in his memoir that "nobody seemed surprised."<sup>3</sup>

In Washington the war council met again at 5:30 P.M. and reached a final decision: the United States would announce a "suspension of offensive combat operations" for midnight EST, or 8:00 A.M. February 28 on the battlefield. The change from the earlier time of 5:00 A.M. was evidently made entirely for PR reasons; the extra three hours allowed the administration to refer to a "100-hour war" (Schwarzkopf comments sardonically, "I had to hand it to them: they really knew how to package an historic event," but acknowledges the change made little difference on the battlefield).

The White House wanted to add the stipulation that those Iraqi forces left in the "Basra pocket" would have to abandon their equipment and walk home. When this was conveyed to Schwarzkopf, a member of his staff pointed out that it would be impossible to enforce this without keeping up allied attacks. Schwarzkopf says, "He was right, of course. There was a considerable amount of armored equipment—perhaps two divisions worth—pushed up against the pontoon bridges at Basra..." Schwarzkopf told this to Powell, still at the White House meeting, who says, "We were all taken slightly aback," but no one felt it changed the basic equation. As Powell puts it, the Iraqi army's back was broken; there was no need to fight a war of annihilation. All participants agree that no dissenting views were expressed at the meeting.<sup>4</sup>

National security adviser Brent Scowcroft later said in an interview that he had misgivings about ending the war prematurely, but admits he did not voice them at the time. Schwarzkopf told David Frost in an interview after the war that "frankly, my recommendation had been, you know, continue the march..." but quickly backed down when an angry

Colin Powell reminded him that he had every opportunity to press this view during the February 27 discussions, but did not. (In his memoirs, Schwarzkopf says he basically agreed with the White House decision and does not mention the Frost interview.)

The CIA estimates that at the time of the suspension of hostilities Iraq had lost, to all causes, 75 percent of the tanks it had in the Kuwait Theater of Operations (KTO), more than 50 percent of its armored personnel carriers (APCs), and nearly 90 percent of its artillery. Since about half of Iraq's pre-war armed forces had been in the KTO, the magnitude of this disaster can easily be judged.

Even so, the CIA estimate also notes that almost 50 percent of the Republican Guard's major combat equipment in the KTO escaped destruction and remained under Iraqi control. As the Iraqis prepared for another day of battle on February 28, the remnants of four Guard armored and infantry divisions were drawn up in defensive positions west and south of Basra in the hope of delaying the allied advance so that more Iraqi units could escape northward. There is little question that much of their equipment could have been destroyed or captured in another day of fighting. The troops and plans were in place that could have done so, and allied air power would have pounded Iraqi units trying to get across the bridges over the Shatt al Arab waterway.

But it is important to emphasize that the *total* destruction of the Guard units was never an attainable option. At least some of the Guard (probably mainly infantry units) had already been withdrawn across the Euphrates by the time hostilities had ceased. Moreover, equipment isn't everything, and was perhaps not even the most important thing for the Guard's next job, suppressing internal unrest. Gordon and Trainor point out that the Guard had saved its command headquarters units, which enabled it to quickly organize the remnants of the Guard field force into cohesive units. Even after the devastation of another day of fighting, this leadership cadre could well have been among the survivors.

Furthermore, had the Guard units defending Basra withdrawn into the built-up areas of Basra and Zubair, they would have posed a dilemma for the allies. The coalition had no intention of engaging in street-to-street fighting in Iraqi cities, a proposition that would certainly have entailed a higher rate of allied casualties, not to mention many Iraqi civilian casualties. While the allies might have been able to bottle up some Republican Guard units in Basra by cutting off all escape routes north, there would have been no way to compel them to surrender or abandon their equipment without a prolonged blockade.

<sup>3</sup>This does not square entirely with an interview given to Gordon and Trainor by Lieutenant General Calvin Waller, the deputy commander of allied forces in the Gulf, who said he forcefully told Schwarzkopf at the time that ending the war so soon was a mistake. It does, however, accurately reflect the view of Lieutenant General John Yeosock, the commander of the Third Army. While Yeosock had earlier told Schwarzkopf he would have preferred another day to "finish the job," when informed of the White House's decision he thought it was "a reasonable call." "If I had felt strongly otherwise, I would have fought Norm about it." Lieutenant General John Yeosock, telephone interview with author, July 1, 1996.

<sup>4</sup>This summary of events draws from Gordon and Trainor, the memoirs of Powell and Schwarzkopf, and Richard M. Swain, *"Lucky War": The Third Army in Desert Storm* (Ft. Leavenworth, Kans.: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College Press, 1994).

## THE TALKS AT SAFWAN

American handling of the cease-fire talks that took place under a tent at Safwan on March 3, 1991, has added further fuel to the revisionist charge that the allies "gave away" the peace. In his memoir, Schwarzkopf, who conducted the talks for the coalition, says he regrets his decision to allow the Iraqis to fly armed helicopters when the Iraqis said they needed these flights because of the damage done to their transportation system. To be fair to Schwarzkopf, most of this criticism was made later when the role that Iraqi helicopter gunships played in the suppression of the uprisings in the south became known. Once the decision had been reached to end the fighting, Schwarzkopf believed his job was to get allied prisoners of war back, establish clear cease-fire lines to avoid further clashes with the Iraqis, and begin as soon as possible to evacuate American soldiers for their triumphant welcome back home. Understandably, he would have felt that if anything beyond this had been required, it was up to Washington to give him instructions. But beyond receiving approval for his own suggested military agenda, Schwarzkopf received no instructions from Washington to use the United States position on the battlefield as leverage to support political objectives in the postwar situation.

It is thus unrealistic to blame Schwarzkopf for having assured the Iraqis prematurely of American willingness to evacuate Iraqi territory. This was an important point for the Iraqis, and had it not been granted the implementation of other conditions of the cease-fire that were important to the allies would have been complicated. What, exactly, could the allies have achieved by continuing to occupy Iraqi territory? United States willingness to withdraw could not have been used as leverage to prevent Baghdad from suppressing the southern Shiite and northern Kurdish uprisings; Saddam would have waited the United States out, especially when he sensed that above all Washington wanted to bring American troops home as soon as possible.

## THE KURDISH AND SHIITE UPRISINGS

The first incidents of rebellion in Iraq took place in the southern Sunni towns of Abu'l Khasib and

Zubair immediately after the suspension of hostilities. They were touched off by disaffected and angry Iraqi troops straggling northward from the battlefield. Gunshots, and in some cases tank rounds, were fired at posters of Saddam; these incidents quickly generated more widespread demonstrations on the part of the civilian population. The uprising spread rapidly to other cities and towns in the south: Basra on March 1; Suk al-Shuyukh on March 2; Nassiriya, Najaf, and Kufa on March 4; Kerbala on March 7.

The best analysis of the uprisings is an article in the May-June 1992 issue of *Middle East Report* by Falah Abd al-Jabar, a London-based Iraqi journalist with good connections to the Iraqi opposition, who had also talked with participants in the uprisings. Abd al-Jabar writes that "a detailed account of what happened in each city is impossible, but reports in

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*The uprisings had no chance when they failed to spread to Baghdad and the central Sunni towns, the political nerve center of the country.*

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various outlawed Iraqi publications speak of a series of events remarkably similar in every case. Masses would gather in the streets to denounce Saddam Hussein and Ba'thi rule, then march to seize the mayor's office, the Ba'th Party headquarters, the secret police (*mukhabarat*) building, the prison and the city's garrison (if there was one). People shot as they went at every poster or wall relief of the dictator. As the cities came under rebel control, the insurgents cleaned out Ba'thists and mukhabarat."<sup>5</sup>

But, beyond these outbursts of rage at the apparatus of state control, the uprisings seemed to go nowhere. Although rebels were in control of these towns for several days, their leadership was fragmented and ineffective. Refugees fleeing south continued to report "chaotic conditions" in the towns under rebel control. No effort appears to have been made to restore order and organize a defense against the suppression that was inevitably to come. There was no evident communication between the rebel leadership in the various towns (ironically the air war's devastation of the Iraqi communications system made this even more difficult) and no apparent effort to convey what was happening in the south to the segments of the Baghdad population that might also have been ready to revolt.

As Abd al-Jabar points out, the revolt in the south was at a critical disadvantage. "First, it was close to the front lines where Republican Guard units were still stationed. Second, while the conscripted military was ripe for rebellion, it was politically immature. And thirdly, the Islamists, in the

<sup>5</sup>The phrase "cleaned out" should not be misunderstood; hundreds of government security and Baath Party personnel were killed in the fighting or executed by the rebels after summary trials in the cities they took over.

euphoria of apparent early success, joined in and raised a disastrous slogan: Ja'fari [Shiite] rule." Abd al-Jabar also notes that the Iraqi political opposition was surprised by the uprisings and totally unprepared to offer leadership.

The sectarian aspect was probably the most critical factor. Iraqi Shia who had fled to Iran during the Iraq-Iran War began to come back across the border, some displaying pictures of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini and Iraqi opposition figure Muhammad Bakr al-Hakim, who had organized the "Supreme Assembly of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq" in 1982 and was now based in Iran. Iran's behavior during the crisis was in fact quite cautious, and the role of the Iraqi exiles was limited—they did not start the uprisings, nor were they the majority element—but their attempt to co-opt the revolt in the name of Islam was enough to give the rebellion a sectarian character. This undermined the appeal of the uprising in the politically important central Sunni-dominated part of the country and, as Abd al-Jabar says, "provided an opportunity for Saddam to garner domestic support and regain implicit if undeclared international support." The sectarian aspect was underscored when uprisings began in the Kurdish region a few days later.

Meanwhile, the Iraqi military command reorganized the surviving elements of the Republican Guard and used them to restore control in the south. By all accounts they went at this with a vengeance. A Jordanian photographer reported seeing Guard tanks in the streets of Basra on March 4 "destroying everything in front of them." Reprisals were swift and brutal. Refugees reported fierce fighting for several days, but the tide turned rapidly. By March 7 loyalist troops were reported to be in control of Basra; after heavy shelling by government forces the rebellion was quelled in Kerbala on March 12 and in Najaf the next day. A further break for Saddam was that the rebellion in the Kurdish areas did not begin until after suppression of the southern revolt was well under way (the first reports of unrest in the north appeared in the international press March 7). While reinforcements in the form of two Guard brigades (a force of about 7,500 men) were sent from the northern part of the country and apparently participated in the sieges of Kerbala and Najaf, the basic job of suppression was performed by Republican Guard troops that had been in the Kuwait theater during the Gulf War.

According to one analyst, the Iraqi command succeeded in putting together, out of the remnants of the Gulf War forces, about five effective divisions with some 50,000 to 60,000 troops.<sup>6</sup>

The uprisings had no chance when they failed to spread to Baghdad and the central Sunni towns, the political nerve center of the country. Although Teheran radio broadcast reports of massive demonstrations in Baghdad, there has never been independent confirmation that any disturbances took place there.

The uprising in the south posed an uncomfortable dilemma for the United States. Washington did not want to appear to be standing by with folded arms as Saddam put down the rebellion with ruthless efficiency; at the same time, the administration was determined not to be sucked back into military involvement in Iraq. As Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh have pointed out in their 1992 study, *The Gulf Conflict*, Saddam was astute in the days right after the war in accepting without dispute the immediate postwar Security Council resolutions and in scrupulously observing the terms of the ceasefire, thus reinforcing the coalition powers' disposition to call it a mission accomplished and go home.

Also reinforcing the tendency toward nonintervention was the sketchiness of the intelligence available to Washington. No one really knew who the leaders of the uprisings were, how much support they had, or what the Iranian role was. Richard Haass says policymakers were concerned about the reports of Iranian involvement and the "dismemberment of Iraq; we didn't want to see an Islamic Republic established in the south." Colin Powell goes further in saying, "Nor, frankly, was their [the rebels] success a goal of our policy," and he indicates his agreement with a telegram by Charles Freeman, the American ambassador in Saudi Arabia at the time, which said, "It is not in our interest to destroy Iraq or weaken it to the point that Iran and/or Syria are not constrained by it." Much of the retrospective commentary has been clothed in these geopolitical terms, but the most powerful considerations at the time were a strong bias against becoming re-engaged with Iraq, no matter what the perceived benefits, and a very unclear picture as to what any form of intervention could accomplish. The result was an embarrassing two weeks of belligerent warnings to the Iraqis accompanied by determined inactivity.

Was there anything the United States could have done to help the rebels? It certainly could have used its airpower to suppress the helicopter gunships. But, undeniably effective as the helicopters were in

<sup>6</sup>Roland Danreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: A Political and Strategic Analysis*, Adelphi Paper no. 264 (London: Institute for International and Strategic Studies, 1991–1992).



helping to quell the rebellion, their absence would probably not have made the difference between failure and success for the uprisings. The problem for the United States and its allies was that, having decided that they were not prepared to commit ground forces to establish, if necessary, a protectorate for the south, any half-measures raised the question, "How far do we go if the last half-measure fails? And what does a failed intervention do to allied interests in the region?" The Bay of Pigs experience certainly comes to mind as a cautionary precedent.

## TWENTY-FOUR HOURS IN THE BALANCE

Compared with the meticulous planning that characterized preparations for the Persian Gulf War—especially the decision to concentrate overwhelming force to make sure the allied victory was a complete one—United States decision making to end the war had a decidedly ad hoc quality to it. Some allowance must be made for the "fog of war"—in particular the difficulty of getting timely and accurate battlefield damage assessments—and the surprising rapidity of the Iraqi collapse. Even so, once the main objective of liberating Kuwait had been achieved, Washington decision makers seemed to lose interest in the information that was available about the condition of the Iraqi army. Instead, they were preoccupied with the adverse publicity of the "Highway of Death" media reports, and with an overwhelming sense of relief that such a brilliant military victory had been achieved at so little cost.<sup>7</sup> Why press one's luck with another day of fighting? The mood at the political level was reinforced by the military high command's determination to make this war turn out differently from the Vietnam experience, with its ill-defined objectives, incremental reinforcements, and waning public support. In this atmosphere, even the news that the gate wasn't really closed on the Republican Guard was brushed aside.

One must respect the enormous responsibility that any president bears in making a decision that

would add even a few names to those that were already on the allied casualty list, and it is certainly to the credit of George Bush and Colin Powell that they were thinking humanely about Iraqi casualties as well. It is also true that the stated objectives of the war were achieved by the morning of February 28. We can accept that the ouster of Saddam Hussein was indeed only a "war hope" and not a war aim.

But Bush had voiced hope of Saddam's ouster often enough, and any thought given to the postwar situation would have concluded that the survival of the Saddam regime would make the American objective of regional stability far more difficult to achieve. Policymakers at the time could not have known that a rebellion in the southern cities was about to break out. But from their own postwar testimony they were hoping for a coup of some sort, probably from within the armed forces. Recognizing the role the Republican Guard played in supporting the regime, it would have been logical to make sure maximum damage had been inflicted on the Guard. This, indeed, had been Powell's and Schwarzkopf's objective in planning the war from the beginning. From what policymakers knew at the time, continuing the war for another 24 hours to achieve that objective would have made sense. It was in part the universal conviction in Washington that no political leader could survive the catastrophe that had been inflicted on Saddam that made them casual about relating military results to Iraq's internal political situation.

But, from what we now know about the uprising that did take place, and about the internal situation in Iraq, it is hard to make the case that another day of fighting would have made the difference between Saddam's survival and ouster. No doubt the task of suppression would have taken somewhat longer if the regime had been deprived of the use of heavy armor and helicopters; but the ultimate outcome of a battle between battered but still disciplined troops and a rebellion that was disorganized and lacking in overall leadership or any plan of action beyond taking revenge on local officials was never in doubt. As Defense Intelligence Agency historian Brian Shellum put it in an interview, well-led soldiers with rifles in trucks—and Saddam had plenty of those—would have been enough in the end to do the job. And as another analyst has written—and this is at the heart of the matter—what Saddam had to do in the ashes of defeat was to maintain the nerve of the inner ruling group,<sup>8</sup> and he managed to do it. ■

<sup>7</sup>President Bush has stressed the adverse publicity aspect in postwar statements, most recently, for example, in an article written for the German newspaper *Welt am Sonntag* (Hamburg) on September 22, 1996: "If we had continued the war one more day, just to destroy more tanks and to kill more pitiful soldiers retreating on the highway toward Basra with hands raised, public opinion would have immediately turned against the coalition."

<sup>8</sup>Danreuther, op. cit., p. 63.

"[A]s the Romans, Crusaders, Mongols, Ottomans, French, and British all learned, hegemonic relationships with the Middle East can be short-lived and even disastrous for the once-dominant power. Whether the United States can be more enlightened and successful than its predecessors remains to be seen."

## Hazardous Hegemony: The United States in the Middle East

STEPHEN ZUNES

Throughout the centuries, Western nations have tried to impose their order on the Middle East, only to find themselves at the receiving end of a popular and often violent backlash. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf War triumph, the United States stands as the region's dominant outside power, but its hegemony may also prove to be short-lived.

At the intersection of three continents and the source of nearly 70 percent of the world's petroleum reserves, the Middle East has been described by leading American officials as the most strategically important area in the world. No longer concerned that the region might fall to Soviet influence, the United States remains apprehensive about indigenous movements that could challenge American interests. There is a widely perceived threat from radical secular or radical Islamic forces, as well as concern over the instability that could result from any major challenge to the rule of pro-Western regimes, even if led by potentially democratic movements.

The most crucial part of the Middle East is the Persian Gulf region, where conservative pro-Western monarchies consider the radical regimes in Iraq and Iran a threat and look to the United States for protection.

### THE GAP IN GULF POLICY

Since the Persian Gulf War, the United States has thrown its immense military, diplomatic, and economic weight behind the Gulf monarchies. Though

they govern less than 10 percent of the Arab world's total population, these regimes control most of its wealth. Before the war, it was difficult for the United States to engage in military exercises or even arrange a port call without asking for permission months in advance. Not any more.

There is now an effective permanent United States military presence in the Gulf of nearly 25,000 troops, with major naval facilities in Bahrain and ground forces stationed in Saudi Arabia. The costs are extraordinary—over \$70 billion annually—and are shared by both the United States and the Gulf monarchies. American critics argue that this deployment is a financial drain and creates a situation where American military personnel are effectively serving as a mercenary force for autocratic sheikhdoms. Nevertheless, there appears to be a bipartisan consensus in Washington that the United States has a clear strategic imperative to maintain a presence in the Gulf.

Virtually all the Gulf Arabs and their leaders felt threatened after Iraq's seizure of Kuwait in 1990 and were grateful for the strong American leadership in the 1991 war against Saddam Hussein's regime. At the same time, there is an enormous amount of cynicism regarding American motives: Arab rulers cannot shake the idea that the war was fought not for international law, self-determination, and human rights, as the Bush administration claimed, but simply to protect United States access to oil and to gain a strategic toe-hold in the region. It is apparent that a continued United States presence will be welcomed by these rulers only as long as they believe it is necessary.

Meanwhile, the United States has insisted on maintaining the strict sanctions the UN imposed against Iraq to force compliance with international

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demands that Iraq pay compensation to Kuwait for its brutal six-month occupation and dismantle its capability to produce weapons of mass destruction. The United States hopes that the sanctions will lead to the downfall of Saddam's regime as well. However, this policy appears to have strengthened Saddam's rule. The desperate economic conditions created by the sanctions have made the Iraqi people more dependent on the government for their survival and less likely to risk openly defying Saddam's authority. The suffering is great: an October 1996 UNICEF report estimated that at least 4,500 children are dying every month from malnutrition and disease that are directly attributable to the sanctions. Popular resentment has focused the blame for the suffering squarely on the United States, not the totalitarian regime whose ill-fated conquest of Kuwait led to the economic collapse of this once-prosperous country.

The latest round of American air strikes against Iraq in September 1996 received little international support. The United States justified the attacks on the grounds that Iraqi forces had illegally moved into Kurdish-populated areas of northern Iraq that had been under UN protection since Saddam's brutal repression of the Kurdish population at the end of the Gulf War. Critics, however, saw the air strikes not so much as in the Kurds' defense as simply another futile attempt by a frustrated Clinton administration to strike back at an upstart dictator who continues to challenge the United States.

The Kurds are a nation of more than 20 million whose population is divided between six separate countries and whose nationalist movements are rife with factionalism. During the last five years, the worst repression against the Kurds has come from Turkey, which receives military, economic, and diplomatic support from the United States. In March 1995, thousands of Turkish troops crossed into Iraqi territory to attack the Kurds. Though this incursion also took place in the UN safe haven in northern Iraq and was far greater in scope than Saddam's forays that preceded the American air attacks, President Bill Clinton was virtually the only world leader to support the Turkish offensive, making his recent response to the Iraqi action rather suspect.

While the United States clearly wants Saddam Hussein out of power, it and other powers do not want to risk the country's total disintegration. The United States wants neither a victory by a radical Kurdish movement in the north nor a successful rebellion in the south of the country, where an Ira-

nian-backed Shiite Muslim movement has challenged the authority of the Sunni Muslim-dominated government in Baghdad. At the same time, the totalitarian nature of the Iraqi regime makes internal political change difficult.

### STOKING THE ISLAMIC "THREAT"

Perhaps the most serious challenge to American influence in the Middle East, however, is not from secular nationalists like Saddam Hussein, but from religiously based adversaries. Islam, like other religions, can be quite diverse in its interpretation of the faith's teachings as they apply to contemporary political issues. There are a number of Islamic-identified parties and movements that seek peaceful coexistence and cooperation with the West and are moderate on economic and social policy. Yet the orientation of some Islamic movements in the Middle East today is indeed reactionary, violent, and misogynist, and includes a virulently anti-American perspective.

Such movements have risen to the forefront primarily in countries where there has been a dramatic physical dislocation of the population as a result of war or uneven economic development. Ironically, the United States has often supported policies that have helped spawn such movements by, for example, providing military, diplomatic, and economic aid for Israeli attacks and occupation policies that have torn apart Palestinian and Lebanese societies, which in turn have given rise to extremist movements that were unheard of as recently as 15 years ago. The United States has also encouraged a number of Middle Eastern governments to adopt neoliberal economic policies, which have destroyed traditional economies and turned millions of rural peasants into a new urban underclass populating the teeming slums of cities such as Cairo, Tunis, Casablanca, and Teheran. While policies advocating free trade and privatization have resulted in increased prosperity for many, far more people have been left behind, providing easy recruits for Islamic extremists protesting corruption, materialism, and economic injustice.

It is also noteworthy that in countries that have allowed Islamic groups to participate fully in the democratic process—such as Jordan, Turkey, and Yemen—the Islamists have played a largely responsible role in parliamentary politics. It has only been in countries where democratic rights have been seriously curtailed that the Islamists have taken on the more radical, militaristic, and anti-democratic



forms the United States finds so disturbing. Many Islamic movements, such as those in Egypt, the West Bank and Gaza, and Algeria, include diverse elements that would span the ideological spectrum if they were allowed to function in an open democratic system.

In a response that strikingly resembles the policies brought to bear against the perceived Communist threat during the cold war, the United States has supported authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes in imposing military solutions to what are essentially political, economic, and social problems. The result of such a policy may be to encourage the very extremist forces it seeks to suppress.

## ISRAEL AND ITS NEIGHBORS

One area where the United States has received high praise is in its pursuit of peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Yet the United States has hampered rather than promoted the peace process. For over two decades, the international consensus for peace in the Middle East has involved the withdrawal of Israeli forces to within Israel's internationally recognized boundaries in return for security guarantees from Israel's neighbors, the establishment of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and special status for a shared Jerusalem. During this time the Palestine Liberation Organization, under the leadership of Yasir Arafat, has evolved from carrying out terrorism and calling for Israel's destruction to supporting the international consensus for a two-state solution.

However, the United States has rejected the international consensus and currently takes a position more closely resembling that of Israel: supporting a Jerusalem under exclusive Israeli sovereignty; only partial withdrawal from the occupied territories; and no independent Palestine. As a result, many Arabs question whether the United States can serve as a fair mediator in the conflict, arguing that talks should instead be held under the auspices of the United Nations.

Despite arguments to the contrary, Zionism is not

an inherently racist or expansionist ideology. However, any nationalist movement given the unconditional diplomatic, economic, and military backing of a superpower knows that it need not worry about the consequences of its actions, which results in some of its more chauvinistic elements rising to leadership.

For example, the United States has blocked enforcement of UN Security Council resolutions calling for Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and has defended Israeli attacks on Lebanese villages in retaliation for Muslim guerrilla attacks. The United States has also refused to insist on Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, even after the once-intransigent Syrian regime finally agreed to international demands for strict security guarantees and eventual normalized relations. Regarding the Palestinians, the interpretation of autonomy by Israel and the United States has thus far led only to limited Palestinian control of one-tenth of the West Bank in a patchwork arrangement that more closely resembles American Indian reservations or the infamous Bantustans of apartheid-era South Africa than anything approaching statehood.

Most observers recognize that one of the major obstacles to Israeli-Palestinian peace is the Israeli policy of expanding Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. However, the United States has blocked enforcement of Security Council resolutions calling for Israel to withdraw its settlements from Palestinian land, although these settlements were established in violation of international law, which forbids the colonization of territories seized by military force. In addition, the Clinton administration, in a reversal of policy from previous administrations, has not opposed the expansion of existing settlements and has been ambivalent regarding the large-scale construction of exclusively Jewish housing developments in Israeli-occupied East Jerusalem.

According to United States law, the costs of such construction projects in the occupied territories must be deducted from the \$2 billion annual allocation of the controversial \$10 billion American loan guarantee to Israel approved in 1992. However, each year's deduction has led to an increase in direct United States aid by almost the same amount. Israelis opposing their government's settlement policies charge that the United States is now essentially subsidizing Israeli settlements, since the Israeli government knows that for every dollar it spends on settlement activity, the United States will convert a loan guarantee into a grant.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In 1993, after the first announced reduction of \$437 million, President Clinton authorized Israel to draw an additional \$500 million in United States military supplies from NATO warehouses in Europe. A similar scenario unfolded the following year: after deducting \$312 million for settlements from the loan guarantee, Clinton authorized \$96 million to redeploy Israeli troops from Gaza and another \$240 million to facilitate the withdrawal of Israeli forces from West Bank cities, based on the rather odd assumption that it would cost more to withdraw troops than to maintain them in hostile urban areas.

While the American public appears to strongly support Israel's right to exist and the United States as a guarantor of that right, there is growing skepticism as to the level and unconditional nature of United States aid to Israel. Among elected officials, however, there are virtually no calls for a reduction of current aid levels in the foreseeable future, since almost all United States aid to Israel comes back to the United States in the form of purchases of American armaments and interest payments to American banks for previous loans.

Despite a closer strategic relationship with the Gulf monarchies, the United States–Arab alliances clearly lack the advantages Israel enjoys in terms of political stability, well-trained armed forces, technological sophistication, and the ability to mobilize human and material resources; they can never be a substitute for the United States alliance with Israel. In addition, given that continued support of Israel has not interfered with an unprecedented degree of cooperation with Egypt and the Gulf monarchies or with a rapprochement with Syria, there appear to be few risks for the United States in continuing its alliance with Israel even as it cultivates closer strategic relationships with authoritarian Arab regimes.

Despite serious reservations about Israel's treatment of the Palestinians, Americans have a long-standing moral commitment to Israel's survival. United States support for successive Israeli governments in recent years, however, appears to come more from a recognition of how Israel supports American strategic interests in the Middle East and beyond. Israel has helped suppress victories by radical nationalist movements in Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, and the occupied territories. The Israelis have kept Syria, for many years an ally of the Soviet Union, in check. The Israeli air force is predominant throughout the region. Israel's frequent wars have provided battlefield testing for American arms. Israel has been a conduit for United States arms to regimes and movements too unpopular in the United States for direct military assistance, such as apartheid-era South Africa, Iran, Guatemala, and the Nicaraguan contras. The Israeli secret service has assisted the United States in intelligence gathering and covert operations. Israel has missiles capable of reaching the former Soviet Union and has cooperated with the United States in researching and developing new jet fighters and

anti-missile defense systems. No United States administration wants to jeopardize such an important relationship.

### **MAKING THE MIDDLE EAST UNSAFE FOR DEMOCRACY?**

Whatever the failings of Israeli democracy regarding the treatment of Palestinians, the human rights record of many of Israel's neighbors has been even worse. The growing pro-democracy and human rights movement in the Middle East has not shared the remarkable successes of its counterparts in Eastern Europe, Latin America, or Africa. Most Middle Eastern governments remain autocratic.

Except for occasional rhetorical support for greater individual freedoms, the United States has generally not supported such efforts at democratization. Indeed, the United States has reduced—or maintained at low levels—its economic, military, and diplomatic aid to Arab countries that have experienced substantial liberalization in recent years while increasing support for autocratic regimes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt, and Morocco. Jordan, for example, received large-scale United States support in the 1970s and 1980s despite widespread repression and authoritarian rule; when it opened up its political system in the early 1990s, the United States substantially reduced—and, for a time, suspended—foreign aid. Aid to Yemen was cut off within months of the newly unified country's

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*[T]he United States has supported authoritarian Middle Eastern regimes in imposing military solutions to what are essentially political, economic, and social problems.*

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first democratic election in 1990. United States aid to Israel increased during the 1980s, when the Israeli government's repression in the occupied territories reached record levels. Aid to Morocco grew as that country's repression in occupied Western Sahara and even within Morocco itself continued unabated. And the United States largely welcomed the 1992 military coup in Algeria, which nullified that country's first democratic elections. Whatever the actual intentions of the United States, the message to Middle Eastern countries appears to be that democracy is not important.

The Middle East is the destination of the majority of American arms exports, creating enormous profits for politically influential arms manufacturers. Despite promises of restraint, United States arms transfers to the region have topped \$90 billion since the Gulf War. Joe Stork, in a survey for the Middle East Research and Information Project,

argues that the Middle Eastern arms race continues for three reasons: 1) arms sales are an important component of building political alliances, especially with the military leadership of recipient countries; 2) there is a strategic benefit coming from interoperability, of having United States-manufactured systems on the ground in the event of a direct United States military intervention; and, 3) arms sales are a means of supporting military industries faced with declining demand in Western countries. To link arms transfers with human rights records would lead to the probable loss of tens of billions of dollars of annual sales for American arms manufacturers, which are among the most powerful special interest groups in Washington.

With the exception of Israel, none of America's major allies in the region can really be considered democracies, yet none require democratic institutions in order to fulfill American strategic objectives. Indeed, the opposite may be true: the Middle Eastern countries that most vigorously opposed the United States war against Iraq in 1991—Jordan and Yemen—were the two Arab states with the most open political systems. Most observers acknowledge that close strategic cooperation with the United States tends to be unpopular in Arab countries, as are policies that devote large government expenditures to the acquisition of weapons, most of which are of United States origin. Were these leaders subjected to the will of the majority, they would likely be forced to greatly reduce arms purchases from and strategic cooperation with the United States. As the British-based Middle East specialist Dilip Hiro describes it, the United States does not actually support democracy in the Middle East because "it is much simpler to manipulate a few ruling families—to secure fat orders for arms and ensure that oil prices remain low—than a wide variety of personalities and policies bound to be thrown up by a democratic system," since elected governments might reflect the popular sentiment for "self-reliance and Islamic fellowship."<sup>2</sup>

### CLINTON AS REAGAN REDUX?

It is undeniable that democracy and universally recognized human rights have never been common

in the Arab-Islamic world. Yet the tendency in the United States to emphasize cultural or religious explanations for this absence minimizes other, arguably more salient, factors. These include the legacy of colonialism as well as high levels of militarization and uneven economic development, much of which can be linked in part to the policies of Western governments, including the United States. There is a tragic irony in a United States policy that sells arms and often sends direct military aid to repressive Middle Eastern regimes that suppress their own people and crush incipient human rights movements, only to then claim that the lack of democracy and human rights is evidence that the people do not want them. In reality, these arms transfers and diplomatic and economic support systems play an important role in keeping these regimes in power by strengthening the hand of the state and supporting internal repression.

Indeed, Clinton's view of the Middle East is not unlike President Ronald Reagan's view of Central America: discount the authoritarianism, poverty, and social injustice within allied countries and blame their internal unrest on outside forces; insist that military solutions are required to resolve what are essentially political and economic problems; see terrorism and extremist movements as the primary problem rather than the gross injustices that spawn them; apply strict interpretations of international law and UN resolutions to governments the United States opposes and ignore them when they target governments the United States supports; and position the United States as the primary economic, military, and diplomatic force in the region even to the exclusion of its European allies.

So far, United States policy has largely been successful in extending American strategic and economic interests in the region. However, as the Romans, Crusaders, Mongols, Ottomans, French, and British all learned, hegemonic relationships with the Middle East can be short-lived and even disastrous for the once-dominant power. Whether the United States can be more enlightened and successful than its predecessors remains to be seen. Given the growing resentment at the United States role by much of the region's population, however, this is unlikely to occur unless there are dramatic changes in United States Middle East policy. ■

<sup>2</sup>Dilip Hiro, "The Gulf Between the Rulers and the Ruled," *New Statesman and Society*, February 28, 1993.



Does the Welfare Party's December 1995 electoral victory signify a shift toward Islamic government and alliances, or does it herald a new era for Turkey, a merger of its traditional Islamic identity with contemporary democracy?

## Pragmatists or Ideologues? Turkey's Welfare Party in Power

JENNY B. WHITE

In December 1995, parliamentary elections brought Welfare, Turkey's first self-declared Islamic political party, to power. Does this change in leadership imply a change in direction for Turkey that will see it shift from a secularist, Western-oriented path toward a new political and economic brotherhood with other Muslim countries, as Welfare's leader, Necmettin Erbakan, promised in some of his campaign speeches? Will Turkey be the next domino to fall in the long line of states that have chosen Islam—or had it imposed?

At best, this experiment in the Islamic leadership of a democratic society will show the way a tolerant and effective government can meet the crucial challenge of constructing modernity in a culturally unique manner. At worst, it could erupt into violent clashes between secularists and extremist Islamists intent on imposing a form of Islamic law and lifestyle, either through the political system or outside it. In the short term, the delicately balanced governing coalition of the Islamist Welfare Party and the centrist True Path Party (DYP), along with the realities of rule, the pragmatic nature of the leaders in power, an active civil society, a relatively free press, and the ever-present vigilance of a military that styles itself democracy's guarantor, mitigate against an extreme deviation from Turkey's pro-Western, secular democratic path.

Turkey also has an established electoral system that has the confidence of its people. Citizens have a real choice in who will govern them and can voice

preferences and change governments. Turkey cannot be considered a replica of the authoritarian political systems in the Arab world that are struggling with similar issues of reconciling Islam and secularism. Nonetheless, Welfare's participation in the government will help answer a central question for the contemporary Middle East, and for the larger Muslim world: whether inclusion in the political system encourages radicals to become moderates.

### CONFRONTING KEMAL'S LEGACY

Modern Turkey's guiding principle has been Kemalism, a form of nationalism very much bound up with secularism and identification with Europe. It is the legacy of the founder of the Turkish republic in 1923, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, whose desire to see Turkey take its place among modern states led him to institute enormous political and social changes. Among these were attempts to control Islam as a political force and to relegate it to the realm of personal devotion. The training of Islamic specialists to fill positions in mosques came under the authority of a state ministry (as did the content of their sermons); clothing indicating religious occupations was forbidden in public; and overtly religious symbols, such as women's headcoverings, were forbidden in civil service jobs and in other state institutions, such as schools and universities. These policies were not the result of grassroots social movements for change, but dictated from governing elites.

Ataturk's autocratic legacy lingers, even though Turkey has held multiparty elections since 1950 that have seen a variety of parties compete, some of them appealing more or less openly to Islamic sentiments. It is, however, still illegal for parties to advocate a political platform based on *sharia*

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(Islamic law), although in recent years an explosion of periodicals has publicly promoted sharia as laws banning its promotion have been loosened or unenforced. Despite these developments, the Welfare Party has come to power on a more mundane platform of social welfare and economic justice, albeit a platform with a justification in Islamic morality.

Welfare has also styled itself as the only truly democratic party, arguing that Turkey has been ruled long enough by Kemalist secularist elites who have legislated away religious freedom. Party supporters demand, among other things, that female students attending universities should be allowed to wear headscarves (the scarves are no longer banned, but policies on wearing them are left to the individual institution). Young religious specialists have begun to appear in their robes of office in the street, although this is illegal. Welfare supporters argued before the elections that if voted into power then they would be the ones restoring political freedom. This view finds support among some reformist liberals as well, who find state repression of religious expression and ethnic identity too heavy-handed.

Welfare's message appeals primarily to the provincial lower middle class and the urban lower classes, many of whom have migrated from the provinces. These groups feel they have been left out of the staunchly Western secularist nation but are now in a position to demand the representation of their cultural values in the government—and a larger share of the economic pie. Welfare has won support from the economically marginalized, whose ranks have grown with economic restructuring and liberalization.

Welfare Party supporters are, however, as comfortable with consumer products and technology as they are with Islamic values. Party officials, with their characteristic close-cropped beards, speed through city streets in late-model automobiles while chatting on car phones en route to their offices, where they use computers to track voter data. Their success is due in large part to this combination of the latest technology with intensive face-to-face networking and the use of local ward heelers, who show concern for the problems of individual families in their community.

Welfare propaganda for the 1995 elections downplayed the party's religious side; party political ads cast the party as modern and focused on such voter issues as pensions, health care, employment, the environment, and housing. Despite Welfare's pragmatism and modern image, there is concern that

more radical religious zealots are riding into power on its coattails.

## FORGING A COALITION

Welfare's 21 percent share of the vote in the 1995 parliamentary elections fell far short of a majority. The two major center-right parties, Mesut Yilmaz's Motherland Party (ANAP) and Tansu Ciller's True Path Party (DYP), together captured around 39 percent of the vote; the left-of-center Republican People's Party (CHP) and the Democratic Left Party (DSP) won a total of 25 percent. The remainder of the vote was divided among the ultranationalist National Action Party (MHP), which received 8.2 percent; the Kurdish-identified People's Democracy Party (HADEP), with 4.2 percent; and other smaller parties.

Although Welfare can claim to have received the largest number of votes (by a slim margin), almost four-fifths of the electorate voted against it, with a full two-thirds choosing centrist parties. This is a bit lower than usual; since 1950 the major centrist parties have always received between 73 and 98 percent of the vote. However, Welfare's showing by no means expresses a mandate for the Islamic path it advocated in some of its preelection rhetoric, especially given the high voter turnout of 85 percent.

Nationally, Welfare's greatest support came in its traditional strongholds of central and eastern Anatolia. In Istanbul, Turkey's largest city, and Ankara, the capital, Welfare outpaced ANAP by a few percentage points, but taking the major centrist parties together, was heavily outvoted. In Turkey's third largest city, Izmir, the DSP and DYP each gained a fourth of the vote, with ANAP close behind, while Welfare received less than 10 percent. This indicates that Welfare's popularity remains high among urban migrants, who make up around 60 percent of the population of these cities, but it is by no means universal.

Much of the vote for Welfare can be attributed to deep dissatisfaction with the performance of the centrist parties, as was the case in the 1994 local elections in which Welfare won many mayoral races around the country. For the most part, Welfare mayors have been more efficient and less corrupt than their predecessors. Citizens joke that even bribes have been institutionalized and one now receives receipts for them. Buses run, the garbage is collected, and social services in general have improved. The other major parties have been accused of corruption, cronyism, and inefficiency, and blamed for high inflation (currently averaging 75 percent per year), increasing unemployment,

and the growing divide between rich and poor. This year's budget deficit has been forecast at over \$11 billion, or 7 percent of the gross domestic product. Now that Welfare is in power, it can expect to be tarred with the same brush as it struggles with some of Turkey's most intractable problems.

Over half of Turkey's 60 million people now live in cities; Istanbul alone is estimated to have 12 million inhabitants, far beyond what the city's ecology or infrastructure can bear. In contrast, many villages have been emptied of young people for whom there is no work and no future on the land. Yet in the cities, work is even harder to find. Government implementation of IMF-mandated structural adjustment policies, including privatization of the enormous state industries, has left many people without jobs and the skills to compete in an increasingly sophisticated job market. The pace of privatization has been a source of bitter dispute within the government and was a major factor in a series of failed governments that culminated in early elections in December 1995.

When the Welfare Party received the largest share of the vote in the December parliamentary elections, President Suleyman Demirel asked Welfare leader Necmettin Erbakan to form a government. Initially, none of the other major parties would join a Welfare-led coalition. With Welfare frozen out, a coalition was forged between the DYP and ANAP, with the DYP's Tansu Ciller continuing as prime minister.

Ciller and ANAP's Mesut Yilmaz, who do not like each other, continued their vicious preelection feuding. Welfare, with ANAP support, sponsored a judicial investigation into allegations of corruption against Ciller; Yilmaz hoped that bringing down the government and discrediting Ciller would leave him the sole leader of the political center. Ciller in turn instituted a counterinvestigation into Erbakan's family finances.

In a surprise maneuver notable for its expediency, Ciller, who had previously vowed that she would save Turkey from "the dark forces" of political Islam, struck a deal in June 1996 with Erbakan to form a DYP-Welfare coalition with a rotating prime ministership. Corruption investigations on both sides were dropped and Yilmaz was sidelined. Erbakan was named prime minister and Ciller deputy prime minister and foreign minister in what Turks call the "*haci-baci*" (hajji-elder sister) coalition. The Turkish stock market, anticipating greater political stability, rose 3 percent the day Erbakan assumed office.

Under the strict eye of the Turkish military, all "sensitive" posts were assigned to the DYP: the Ministry of Defense, the Foreign Ministry, and other agencies dealing with internal and external security. Welfare took over the ministries of finance, agriculture, and public works. Under the agreement, the prime minister's portfolio will rotate to Ciller after two years.

### ERBAKAN'S STRATEGY

Erbakan showed he was aware that an overtly religious message would lack broad support by aiming much of his media election propaganda at the center, but he also appealed to the radical right in speeches promising to withdraw from NATO and the customs union signed in January 1996 with the European Union and forge instead political and economic alliances with other Muslim countries. He promised an end to interest rates and suggested creating an Islamic "dinar" in place of the ailing Turkish lira. He castigated Turkey's new military cooperation agreement with Israel and threatened to annul Operation Provide Comfort, under which United States aircraft use Turkish bases to patrol northern Iraq to protect the region's Kurdish population from Iraqi aggression.

Once in power, Erbakan, a pragmatic politician with decades of experience, immediately backpedaled on his more extreme positions. He signed a new agreement on United States bases and made friendly overtures to Turkey's Western allies. But recently he has raised Western eyebrows by visiting a string of Islamic countries, including Iran and Libya—a move interpreted in some quarters as a sign of Turkey's drift to the east. However, Erbakan's travels—which also included Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia—should be viewed as a diversification of economic interests rather than the nascence of an Islamic trade bloc. Given his post-election acceptance of strategic links and agreements with the West, it was necessary for him to play a Muslim card to retain credibility with his followers. These trips also resulted in joint projects and economic cooperation agreements that will benefit Turkey.

In August, Turkey signed an agreement to purchase \$20 billion worth of natural gas from Iran. Turkey has stressed that this is a commercial agreement that does not involve investment in Iran and, therefore, does not fall under an American law imposing sanctions against countries investing in

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Iran. Turkish officials have also pointed out that France, Germany, and Japan had purchased Iranian natural gas in considerably larger quantities than Turkey. Furthermore, many of the deals being signed have long been in preparation and do not represent new policy directions. Turkey's desire to restart its critical oil trade with Iraq, for example, is an attempt to staunch a loss of revenue exceeding \$27 billion resulting from the UN sanctions; Jordan, which initially supported Saddam Hussein during the Persian Gulf War, has been given exemptions to trade with Iraq, while Turkey, which supported the allies at great expense, has not.

The Islamic trade bloc Erbakan touted during his campaign has little chance of being realized, given the animosity and conflicting interests that divide Turkey's potential trading partners. Turkey has disputes with Iraq and Syria over water and border issues and Syria's support of terrorism. And while Turkey's military cooperation agreement with Israel is only the most recent manifestation of a long history of Turkish power balancing in conflicts affecting regions abutting its borders, the agreement does little to endear Turkey to the Arab states.

There are other points of contention as well. On a recent trip to Egypt, Erbakan received a cool welcome because of his public support for the Muslim Brotherhood, which seeks to overthrow the Egyptian government and create an Islamic state. And in a particularly embarrassing incident during his October 6, 1996, visit to Libya, Erbakan was badly repaid for being one of the few world leaders to extend a friendly hand to that country. At a joint news conference after a monologue condemning various aspects of Turkey's foreign policy that he labeled "wrong from A to Z," Libyan leader Muammar el-Qaddafi insisted that a "Kurdish nation" should be established. This political bombshell led to calls in the Turkish parliament for Erbakan's resignation (he survived a no-confidence motion by 19 votes) and has cast a pall on his attempts to forge closer ties with radical Islamic leaders.

The new government's drive to widen economic relations has not been limited to Islamic countries. Turkey has plans to sign a natural gas pipeline deal with Russia and an oil pipeline agreement with Ukraine, and has established economic cooperation agreements with China, several Central Asian states, and Italy, whose prime minister, Romano Prodi, visited Turkey in September. Turkey is also seeking Italy's support for Turkish admission to the European Union.

## ISLAM AND IDENTITY

What we are seeing in Turkey is the successful expansion of networks of Islamists, that is, Turks whose Islamic beliefs provide the foundation for their political and economic behavior.

The Islamists have been successful in both these arenas, leading to a growing association in the minds of the disenfranchised between Islamism and upward mobility, which, in turn, lends further credibility to the Welfare Party. This success, supporters say, can be attributed to hard work, honesty, and mutual assistance; detractors point to what they say is the same cronyism that Islamists decry in the other political parties.

What is clear is the success of Welfare's organizational strategy. Using local representatives who pay individual attention to constituents' needs, the party is able to weave political loyalties into the web of cultural patterns of mutual obligation and assistance among members of the same community. Welfare's claim to have spoken to every voter in Turkey may be only a small exaggeration.

While some of the Welfare vote is pragmatic, reflecting a leadership void and dismay at the action (or inaction) of the other parties, it also represents an attempt to instantiate Turkish cultural authenticity within a modern state system and the coming of age of a large part of Turkey's population as a political and economic force. This does not mean a rejection of technology or modern modes of thought. Turks are looking forward, not back.

This outlook can be traced to the Turkish government in the 1980s under President Turgut Ozal, who filled its ranks with technocrats and former members of the lower middle class, importing into the bureaucracy interest and expertise in the technology of the West, but also distrust of and distaste for the Westernization of moral and social values that accompanied the opening of Turkey's markets to the world. The lower middle class rise to power and prosperity fueled support for Welfare once Ozal died in 1993 and his Motherland Party came under the more Kemalist secularist leadership of Mesut Yilmaz.

Members of this class believe that Islam reflects Turkey's true identity, and that Kemalism has failed to supply a comparable identity, values, or ethics. They argue instead that Kemalist secularism is a form of undemocratic authoritarianism, and that Islam is compatible with democracy. However, some Islamists (including some members of Welfare) define democracy simply as majority rule; in an interview, one Welfare official told this author

that if the majority wants sharia, then Turkey should have it, although members of "other religions," such as Judaism and Christianity, would be able to live under their own laws. This reflects an idea popular among Islamists of a kind of utopian federalism under which different religious and ethnic communities would live side by side within Turkey under their own laws and with their own institutions of education, culture, and economic life. But when pressed about the fate of secularist Muslims (as opposed to Christians and Jews) who did not wish to live under sharia, the Welfare official replied simply that these were not Muslims.

Erbakan may be the head of an Islamist political party, but many Turks wonder what the rest of the body looks like. Given the ethnic and sectarian pluralism that characterizes Turkish society, the question to be asked about Welfare concerns tolerance; being majoritarian is not the same as a commitment to pluralism.

In a disturbing trend, Welfare officials have tried to impose social changes, many targeting women. In neighborhoods and cities where Welfare won mayoralties in 1994, some community libraries and women's educational centers have been closed and rooms and funds withdrawn, often to be replaced by Koran classes. Where Welfare does not hold the purse strings, as in the case of private foundations and organizations, party supporters have implemented strategies of harassment. Groups of veiled women, for example, sit all day in the halls and rooms of women's occupational training centers, praying out loud so that the centers' activities cannot be carried out, or the participants are intimidated into staying away. Eventually the centers must close or move to a new location.

It is this trend toward authoritarianism on the part of Welfare's followers that disturbs many Turks. Welfare's mainstream leadership is oriented toward the electoral process and appears more flexible and ready to compromise in response to political pressure, but no one is certain about the motives of the cadre of Islamists (and their allies, the neofascists) who have continually infiltrated the ministries and other state bureaucracies since the 1980s. After coming to power, Welfare tried to move hundreds of secular-minded judges to posts in rural districts and replace them with Islamist judges, prompting a public outcry before the move was blocked by a supervisory council. It has shifted non-Islamist civil

servants (whom it cannot fire) to unpleasant and even absurd jobs—such as standing all day in the middle of a busy intersection counting cars—in an attempt to induce them to take early retirement so that their positions can be filled with Islamists. The press has kept a watchful eye on Welfare's actions, and the public as well as civic organizations are quick to mobilize and demonstrate their displeasure.

Nevertheless, there is now a strong Islamist presence in the education and interior ministries, and in the police and security services, where ultranationalist neofascists also have a strong foothold. This weighting to the right of the security services and the police is evident in violent actions against left-leaning demonstrations, such as those by students, labor unions, or Alevi, a liberal Muslim sect. Police brutality remains a widely acknowledged problem, yet the government finds it difficult or inexpedient to control the rightists in charge. Islamic-minded judges stretch the interpretation of

Turkey's legal code, especially in the area of family law. Islamists in the educational system guide resources toward Islamist projects and bleed other programs. Welfare wants to expand the number of religious schools, now around 600, and to allow graduates of Islamic secondary schools to enter the military academies, a practice that is currently forbidden.

### HOLDING THE SECULAR FRONT

There are forces that limit the effect of Welfare and its followers. A strong civil society, comprising not only formal organizations but also informal grassroots initiatives, has effectively blocked most of Welfare's overt attempts to carry out Islam-inspired change, whether it be moving judges, painting curbsides an Islamic green, banning alcohol sales, or changing the capital city of Ankara's official symbol from a pre-Islamic Hittite design to a mosque-dominated skyline. Welfare's secular opponents are aided in their efforts by a vigilant and outspoken media; since the government ended the state monopoly on broadcasting in April 1994, there has been an explosion of private television and radio stations and a decrease in government control. Islamists and secularists debate their views on television and newspapers report Welfare's every step, some with critical editorial comment. The Islamists also have their own media and publishing platforms, representing a multiplicity of ideological directions within their own ranks.

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Islam in Turkey is diverse, ranging from the liberal, left-leaning Alevis to fundamentalists aiming for an Islamic state. In between are a majority of devout Muslims who prefer to live under a secular state as long as it responds to their needs. They may give their vote to the social democrats in one election and the Islamists in the next, depending on each party's performance. A 1995 poll shows that two-thirds of Turks support strong ties with Europe. Turkey's orientation toward Europe, as well as its Central Asian heritage and interests in that region and Muslim Asia, work against an identity bound up with Arab Islam.

Finally, the military is the ultimate defense against the imposition of Islamic law in Turkey. On the day before the elections, chief of staff General Ismail Hakki Karadyl reminded the nation that the "Turkish armed forces are the greatest insurance of the Turkish republic, which is a democratic and secular state. . ." He emphasized Turkey's character as "contemporary, democratic, modern, and secular." This was clearly understood as a warning that the army will step in if any party tries to veer from a secular path of state governance. Moreover, the military recently expelled 14 officers for religious activities and, as was noted, refuses to accept graduates of religious schools in the military academies. The military is also heavily represented in the National Security Council, a government body that provides policy direction, particularly in foreign affairs.

Turkish voters can be fickle, and it is by no means assured that Welfare will be able to repeat its success in the next election, although at present the lack of any clear and respectable leadership has led to fears (supported by polls) that another election will bring an even greater turnout for Welfare. Ciller has compromised the fundamental principles of her party, as has Erbakan, leading to a confusing electoral picture. A recent Welfare convention took place under a giant picture of Ataturk, and Erbakan has made the (to some outrageous) claim that if Ataturk were alive today, he would be a member of the Welfare Party.

Some of the more extreme fears about Welfare have proved unfounded; participation in the political process does seem to breed moderation. The social forces that have been recently empowered politically and economically are motivated by a desire to engage modernity on their own cultural terms. But while this does not necessarily mean a deviation from democracy, the ultimate direction is still unclear.

At the moment, Turkey has a robust, long-standing multiparty system, an active civil society, and a vocal, relatively free press, all representing a wide spectrum of interests and ideologies. It has a dynamic private sector generating growth and opportunity. It also is plagued by many of the same persistent economic and social problems (urbanization, unemployment, inflation, national debt, ethnic unrest, corruption) that bedevil other countries, including some in Europe.

As important as these issues are in Turkey's political landscape, issues of identity also count. Some members of the European Union, which Turkey has been hoping to join for over a quarter century, have recently suggested putting Turkey at arm's length because of its "Islamist" prime minister; meanwhile the EU is considering for rapid membership Eastern European countries that have neither the democratic experience nor the economic stability of Turkey. The European Parliament has frozen aid promised to Turkey under the EU customs union because of Turkey's breach of human rights. Members of the United States Congress regularly lash out at Turkey, demanding that it accept responsibility for the massacres of Armenians during the Ottoman Empire. These actions play into the hands of those (whether Welfare supporters or radicals operating outside of the political system) who want Turkey to turn away from the West. More sympathetic treatment by the European Union and the United States would encourage Turkey to continue taking positive steps in meeting the challenge of putting a Muslim Turkish face on its pluralist Western-oriented democracy. ■



On May 29, 1996, incumbent Shimon Peres lost Israel's first direct election for prime minister to Benjamin Netanyahu. Gideon Doron argues that "[v]oter attitudes toward the peace process and the personalities of the competing candidates provide only a partial explanation [of the electoral results]... A more complete account must include an assessment of the effects of the [recent] electoral reform."

## Israel: The Nationalists Return to Power

GIDEON DORON

Shimon Peres was likened to a modern version of Sisyphus, condemned by the gods to repeatedly run for the post of prime minister but never to win. Yet in the May 29, 1996, prime ministerial and Knesset elections, the Labor Party leader's advantages over his relatively unknown and politically inexperienced rival, Benjamin Netanyahu, were so great that his loss shocked supporters and amazed foes.

The public's reaction resembled that seen in May 1977, when Peres lost for the first time to Menachem Begin. Begin and his Likud Party had spent 28 years in parliamentary opposition; Likud's victory ended the Labor Party's electoral dominance and marked the beginning of Likud as a pivotal force in future governing coalitions. But for Netanyahu the time in opposition was much shorter; in less than four years he was able to regain for himself and Likud the control that had been lost to Labor Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1992. As it had been in 1977 so it was in 1996: the idea of a Peres and Labor electoral defeat was generally dismissed by both experts and laymen even though the writing on the wall had been apparent for some time.

The 1996 electoral outcomes yielded other surprises. Labor and Likud, the two major parties, each lost about a quarter of their power to smaller, identity-oriented parties. Besides Netanyahu's Likud, election winners included the religious and the Arab parties as well as two new parties: Israel Be Alyia, consisting of recent immigrants from the

former Soviet Union, and an issue-oriented party, the security-minded Third Way.

Voter attitudes toward the peace process and the personalities of the competing candidates provide only a partial explanation of these electoral outcomes. A more complete account must include an assessment of the effects of the electoral reform that was first implemented in Israel in 1996.

### THE EFFECTS OF HEAD-TO-HEAD COMPETITION

Netanyahu won in 1996 because, among other things, the Israeli electorate voted not only for a party list but also for a prime minister. Consequently, most citizens voted strategically for one of the two competing candidates, and sincerely for a party list with which they most identified.

The idea of directly electing the prime minister was first introduced in the mid-1980s by a group of law professors who also wanted Israel to adopt a written constitution. Direct elections became publicly popular toward the end of the 1980s when a grand governing coalition of Likud, Labor, and other smaller parties was perceived as paralyzing the powers of the prime minister. If the prime minister were elected directly by the people, it was argued, then he or she would be free to govern without having to consider the preferences of the small coalition partners.

At the time, the leaders of the two major parties, Labor's Peres and Likud's Yitzhak Shamir, rejected this electoral reform. Both understood that their political strength rested more on their perceived ideological position than on personal popularity; they also knew that to become prime minister they would still have to command a majority among the Knesset's 120 members. The two political figures who could most benefit from the reform were

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Yitzhak Rabin and Netanyahu. These two men positioned themselves as candidates of the center; conceptually, they hoped to move into the median of the distribution of voter preferences and hence win election.

This hope became a reality for Rabin in 1992 and then for Netanyahu in 1996. Since the late 1980s, Rabin had grown more popular than Peres among the public. Consequently, leading Labor politicians eager to return to power introduced a primary system in February 1992 that enabled them to select Rabin as party leader. Labor then mobilized public pressure to force Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to adopt the proposed electoral reform; Netanyahu worked behind the scenes to ensure the reform's acceptance.

In March 1992 the Knesset approved legislation allowing direct election for the prime minister. (The date of its implementation, however, was postponed until the next general election in 1996.)

During the 1992 parliamentary campaign, Rabin's strategists presented their candidate to the public as if he were competing directly against Shamir in accordance to the spirit of the new law. Following Labor's victory in that election, Netanyahu moved quickly to introduce a primary system in Likud; by early 1993 he had become the leader of his party and its candidate for prime minister.

After 1993, but with greater intensity in 1995 as general elections approached, Rabin and Netanyahu positioned themselves publicly according to the logic implied by an American-style head-to-head competition. Although Rabin's peace initiatives with the Palestinians, Jordan, and Syria were internationally popular, they generated intense domestic opposition. The opposition headed by Netanyahu claimed that in their pursuit of peace Rabin, and especially his foreign minister, Peres, had become too casual about security matters. By the second half of 1995, Netanyahu was already surpassing Rabin in some public opinion polls. In a bid to shift public support in his direction, Rabin agreed to participate in a mass political demonstration for peace. At the end of that November 4, 1995, demonstration, Rabin was assassinated and Peres was asked by President Ezer Weizmann and the Labor Party to take over as the prime minister.

The trauma of the assassination pushed the opposition into an uncomfortable position because it delegitimized any criticism of government policies.

It also created an illusion that Labor's dominance was secure for many years to come. Polls conducted just after the assassination and in January 1996 by the Labor Party showed that in a competition between Peres and Netanyahu, the former would win by a margin of almost 20 percent. To capitalize on these favorable political conditions, Peres decided to take on the defense minister portfolio in an attempt to portray himself to voters as a center rather than left-of-center candidate. He also called for an early election in May, six months before the legally scheduled date.

Peres's move to the right reflected the growing understanding in the Labor leadership that most Jewish voters believed Peres and his party were too far to the left, which implied a strong commitment to peace and eventually the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. Polls taken during January 1996 also revealed that most voters

believed that Netanyahu held an extreme-right position that was diametrically opposite Peres's perceived position. As noted earlier, to win both men had to move to the median of voter preferences.

Because most Jewish voters held center-to-right positions, Netanyahu's move toward the median was shorter and easier than Peres's. Still, in early 1996, Peres had a clear advantage over Netanyahu among the decisive voters: those who had made up their mind in advance of

the election to support one or the other candidate. But Peres analysts failed to understand that most of the undecided voters leaned toward Netanyahu. They believed, however, that if Netanyahu were to develop an advantage among Jewish voters, this would be diluted by the massive support Peres expected to obtain from Arab voters, who constitute about 10 percent of the Israeli electorate.

As expected, the two contenders' rhetoric was almost identical and concentrated on the credibility of the candidates and the promise of bringing a secure peace to Israelis. Because of this similarity many voters grew alienated or indifferent; they felt that the candidates were presenting positions too far from their own or too ambivalent, which prevented them from making an educated choice. This led to the largest percentage (4.7 percent) of non-voters in Israel's electoral history, a figure twice as large as in previous elections.

Assessing the number of undecided voters and how to attract them became a prime issue in the

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strategies of the two candidates. For Peres, moving to the right risked alienating Arab voters, his most solid group of supporters. But because there was a risk that the undecided would choose Netanyahu over him, Peres began moving toward the center: he froze the peace process; he prohibited the entry of Palestinian workers into Israel; and, finally, in April, he launched operation "Grapes of Wrath" against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. As feared, some potential Arab supporters reacted by concluding that Peres was no better than his rival.

While these considerations potentially seemed to benefit Netanyahu, other issues were at stake. Voters who are ambivalent about their preferred candidate tend to support the known candidate over the unknown challenger (the incumbent effect). This group of undecided voters became the prime target population for Netanyahu. If he could convince them to vote for what he believed to be their true preferences, then he would most likely get their support. Otherwise, he would rather have them perpetuate their confusion and stay at home or, as it actually turned out, cast a blank ballot.

To minimize the initial advantage held by the internationally admired incumbent, Netanyahu had to devise mental obstacles that would make it more difficult for an undecided voter to choose Peres. These obstacles were created by designing an essentially negative campaign in accordance with the behavioral principle of "minimizing regret." In almost every poll taken during the campaign, Peres polled considerably better than Netanyahu on most politically relevant personal attributes. Except for his "natural talent" as an effective communicator through the mass media, Netanyahu's strengths were really a derivative of Peres's weak points. These included the prime minister's advanced age (73 compared to 46) and Peres's perceived hastiness and naïveté in dealing with the Arabs. In categories like experience, credibility, reliability, leadership, vision, openness, and dedication, Peres scored far higher than his rival. Furthermore, according to some polls, almost twice as many respondents believed that Peres and not Netanyahu would "lead Israel to a better future," would better protect "the interests of Israel," "could withstand greater pressures," and was "more convincing."

To counter this, Netanyahu hammered home the idea that Peres's policies would greatly risk the lives and welfare of Israelis because "Peres would divide Jerusalem"; he would retreat from the Golan Heights, leaving northern Israel vulnerable to Syrian attack; and he would not provide a "secure

peace." Labor campaign strategists found themselves on the defensive, and they argued, mistakenly, in what was called a "no-campaign" campaign, that voters are affected by what the government does and not by campaign rhetoric. However, in the context of several terrorist attacks in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Ashkelon, and the escalation of tension on the Lebanese border, it became very difficult for Labor to defend its position and convince the undecided to support Peres.

The new method of directly electing the prime minister introduced a different dimension into the strategic calculus made by the two major parties. It was understood that the winner of the race would form the government regardless of the strength of his party in the Knesset; he would simply gather support from as many small parties as needed to construct a majority coalition. Moreover, no blocking coalition could form against the new prime minister, and a vote of no confidence, the most effective tool the Knesset could wield against the government, became largely an academic exercise since Knesset members would not be willing to dissolve themselves.

With this in mind, the leaders of the two major parties decided to concentrate mainly on the two candidates and to pay less attention to presenting the advantages of voting for the Labor or Likud Knesset lists. They also deliberately ignored the differences between the two modes of voting behavior mentioned earlier, strategic and sincere voting. As a result, they were surprised to find out in 1996 the extent of the disloyalty that prevailed among their traditional voters; after selecting the prime minister, many Israeli voters were primarily concerned with questions of personal and communal identity and socioeconomic issues.

Of the 2,972,589 valid votes cast in the race for prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu obtained 50.49 percent and Shimon Peres 49.51 percent. The difference in the totals was only 29,457 votes, which is less than 1 percent and less than the approximately 81,000 blank ballots that were cast (many of these blank ballots came from Arab voting zones; by not helping Peres, they indirectly contributed to Netanyahu's victory).

Netanyahu defeated Peres in the traditional Likud strongholds: Jerusalem; most of the developing towns and underprivileged neighborhoods; the right-wing radicals living in West Bank settlements; and the agricultural settlements (*moshavim*). Among religious Jews, who constitute over 30 percent of the voting population, Netanyahu outscored



Peres by a four to one ratio (the ultrareligious, who make up 5 percent of the electorate, almost totally supported him). New immigrants supported Netanyahu over Peres by a ratio of three to two. Expectations by Labor strategists that the murder of Rabin would cause Israeli youth to support his political heir, Peres, did not pan out. Ultimately, the Likud candidate obtained 55.5 percent of the Jewish vote to win the election.

Peres outpolled Netanyahu in two of the largest Israeli cities, Tel Aviv and Haifa; in most established urban towns; and in middle class residential neighborhoods and rural (including kibbutzim) locations inside the so-called green lines (the pre-1967 borders). Among secular Jews he obtained almost 338,000 more votes than his rival. Arab voters were his strongest base of support; more than 95 percent cast their ballots in his favor.

The electoral outcome seems to have been arrayed along a socioeconomic division among the Israelis. The veteran Ashkenazi (European) secular middle class Jews and lower class Arabs were for Peres; lower class Jews (mostly of Middle Eastern and North African background) and religious Jews were for Netanyahu.

### THE RACE FOR THE KNESSET

Twenty-one parties registered to run in the Knesset elections, but only 11 reached the finish line by crossing the 1.5 percent of the vote threshold. Among the 10 whose vote totals were too low (or fewer than about 47,000 votes) were 2 radical Arab parties, 2 parties representing religious, right-wing extremists, a senior citizen party, and a new immigrant list.

Labor, which had won 44 seats in 1992, lost 10 seats in 1996, while Likud sustained its previous strength of 32 seats (actually it lost 8 seats because this time it ran in a bloc with the Tzomet Party). Meretz, the left-wing Zionist party, lost 3 seats to finish with 9, and the right-wing radicals of Moledet lost 1 seat and reentered the Knesset with only 2. The ultrareligious Yahadut Hatora Party retained its 4 seats.

There were three sets of winners in the 1996 Knesset elections: the two religious parties, Shas and Mafdal; the two new secular parties, Israel Be Alyia and The Third Way; and the two Arab parties, Hadash and Mada. Shas, which represents religious and traditional Oriental Jews, is purely an identity-oriented party. It obtained 10 seats (4 more than in 1992) to make it the third largest party in the Knesset. Mafdal (or the National Religious Party) gained

9 seats, 3 more than in the last election. This can be attributed largely to a campaign that emphasized the importance of Jewishness in Israeli life, which gained the support of many identity-seeking secular Jews. Israel Be Alyia, which took 7 Knesset seats, was established before the elections by a small group of politically minded individuals who had arrived in Israel during the 1970s from the Soviet Union. They were able to build an organization that attracted close to 175,000 voters, mainly immigrants from the former Soviet Union who came to Israel during the early 1990s. The party's principal purpose is to further their interests, primarily economic and housing issues.

The Third Way is a new issue-oriented party that received 4 seats in the Knesset. Concerned with what seemed to be a risk-prone and rapid Labor-guided peace process, the party was established with the aim of gaining a firmer commitment to maintaining Israel's security, especially in the Golan Heights. Many of the almost 96,500 voters who supported this party belong to the Labor camp and voted for Peres in the contest for prime minister, the result of their traditional loyalty to Labor and the hope that they would play a pivotal role in a Peres-led government.

As mentioned earlier, the Arabs who supported Peres also increased the strength of their own parties in the Knesset. Hadash, the old Communist Party, expanded its appeal to left-oriented Jewish voters by calling for an independent Palestinian state and increased sensitivity to social issues. It gained 5 seats in 1996, compared to the 3 it held in 1992. Likewise, Mada—the Democratic Arab Party, a union of secular and religious Muslims—doubled the number of seats it held to 4. It, too, can be considered an identity-oriented party.

The left-center bloc consisting of Labor, Meretz, and the Arab parties lost its 1992 majority of 61 seats and fell to only 52 seats. The right-wing bloc that includes Likud and Moledet lost 9 seats to end up with only 34 in the Knesset. Hence, in one sense, little has changed: the two pivotal blocs that have emerged include, as usual, the three religious parties (with 23 seats) and the two new secular parties (with 11 seats).

Had Peres won the election he could easily have formed a coalition with the new bloc even against the wishes of the religious and right-wing blocs. Under the old electoral system, in which the leader of the largest party was asked by the president to build a governing coalition, Peres could have maneuvered himself to the post of prime minister.

Perhaps because of the temptations generated by early favorable poll results, Peres abandoned his opposition to the 1992 electoral law, a law that eventually led to his political demise.

The effects of the new electoral law are quite clear. When voters are free to choose in accordance with their sincere preferences (that is, when they are not concerned with security issues since those are embodied in their vote for prime minister), then many yield to personal and communal issues and interests. An analysis of the patterns exhibited by the major voting groups shows that in developing towns, underprivileged rural areas, and urban neighborhoods, Likud and Labor lost more than 10 percent of their support when compared to 1992. The residents of these areas are mostly Oriental and Russian Jews, who constitute close to 20 percent of the total votes cast. The religious parties and the new immigrants list made significant progress in these areas. In the major cities, which still comprise the largest category of voters—contributing over 40 percent to the total votes—Labor is still the strongest party. Even so, it failed, like Likud, to maintain its earlier strength.

Consequently, the Israeli political map remains as diffuse as ever; only minor changes have occurred in the number of parties that successfully entered the Knesset. However, one significant political change has taken place: the small parties of yesterday have become larger and hence their bargaining power in the political system has increased.

## THE IMPLICATIONS

The 1996 elections have put Netanyahu in the driver's seat, which makes it very difficult to strip him of his powers. Labor has become an opposition party in search of a new identity and a new leadership. Three far-reaching implications can be inferred from these outcomes.

First, the decline in the strength of Labor and Likud, and the empowerment of the smaller parties,

may affect the future stability of the Israeli polity. The governing coalition relies on the support of 66 Knesset deputies from six parties. The possible defection of either Shas, Mafdal, or Israel Be Alyia, for example, could transform the government into a minority-based one. Netanyahu could still rule after such a defection, but his ability to initiate and pass laws would be limited.

Second, the influence of the religious parties on Israeli civil society has grown even stronger after the election. As kingmakers who were pivotal in the construction of the parliamentary coalition, they are in a position to demand a return to the "status quo" in the relationship between religious and secular Jews. In fact, their control over the ministries of Education and Culture, Labor, Interior, Religious Affairs, and Housing, as well as Knesset committees like the powerful finance committee, enables them to have an impact on many aspects of Israeli life. They may do this legally and through the implementation of religiously biased public policy. Furthermore, the civil and economic interests of Israeli Arabs are in jeopardy, in part because of their almost total commitment to the losing side in the election, and because the chances that they might support a right-wing candidate in the future are slim. Hence, neither Netanyahu nor his coalition is politically (as opposed to legally) committed to support this group.

In terms of the conduct of public policy, things are not as clear. Netanyahu's basic orientation is similar to that of American neoconservatives. The prime minister would push for a market economy on the one hand and a strong defense system on the other as a precondition to moving in the direction of consolidation with the Arabs. These prospective moves may alienate many of his lower class supporters as well as many of his devoted right-wing hawks. The burden of proof is thus on the government to show that a "secure peace," Netanyahu's campaign slogan, can actually be realized. ■

"On the morning of October 8, Kuwaitis awoke to a new parliament in which the democratic nationalists appeared to be the biggest losers. . . . The spin doctors crowed that the voters had indeed thrown the bums out, and that Kuwaitis had opted for conservatism in the 1996 parliament. But as in 1992, a rush to judgment may be premature."

## Designer Democracy in Kuwait

MARY ANN TÉTREAULT

Kuwait's first postliberation parliament, elected before an international audience in October 1992, marched into office to a chorus of cheers. Four years later it slipped out to general disapproval as its successor, the 1996 National Assembly, was seated with little fanfare. The vilification of the 1992 National Assembly as a do-nothing parliament is unfair: it investigated, it legislated—and it fulminated—with vigor. However, its legislative record was certainly mixed, and its behavior aggravated the nation's rulers and most of the Kuwaiti people more than once during its four-year tenure. It is not clear that the body replacing it will be all that different.

### THE INITIAL SPIN

Widely regarded as an "opposition-dominated" assembly, the 1992 parliament featured cross-cutting divisions that blocked the mobilization of majorities on controversial issues. One division is institutional. Kuwait's parliament is composed of 50 elected representatives and members of the cabinet.<sup>1</sup> Appointed by the emir, the cabinet is organized and led by a prime minister, who also happens to be the crown prince. The first cabinet assembled after the 1992 election included six elected members of the parliament, five of whom

were from the opposition. As part of the parliament, the cabinet often votes as a bloc.

The opposition, which is composed of members affiliated with organized political groups, makes up another of these cross-cutting divisions.<sup>2</sup> In the 1992 parliament there were three Islamist groups (two Sunni and one Shiite), and three groups of "nationalist democrats," who are divided by ideology, social class, or political experience (one group of nationalist democrats consisted of members of the 1985 parliament who had opposed the emir's July 1986 dismissal of parliament, an act that touched off a constitutional crisis that was not resolved until the 1992 election). In general, the Islamist opposition wants to curb the power of the state to interfere with the authority of religious leaders. Sunni Islamists also support a constitutional amendment to make sharia (Islamic law) the basic law of the land. The democratic opposition wants to curb the state's power to interfere with a broad range of civil rights and liberties—including some rights and liberties the Islamists would like to see limited, such as religious freedom and rights for women.

Only 18 members of the 1992 parliament ran as representatives of the opposition groups. The 32 other victorious candidates, 8 of whom had acquired "endorsements" from one or more Islamist groups shortly before the election, ran as independents. Many independents were first-time legislators; others—tribal leaders and so-called service candidates—saw their role chiefly as dispensers of patronage and tended to vote with the government.

Two prominent exceptions among the independents were Ahmad al-Rubei and Ali al-Baghli. Rubei had been a member of the 1985 parliament and had declined to continue his affiliation with

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<sup>1</sup>Suffrage in Kuwait extends to male Kuwaiti citizens who have reached the age of 21; this year male descendants of naturalized citizens were also given the right to vote.

<sup>2</sup>Political parties are illegal in Kuwait. In principle, all Kuwaitis are supposed to be part of a united political family under the leadership of the emir.



the liberal-nationalist political group, Kuwait Democratic Forum (KDF), in 1992. He was the top vote-getter in his district and became education minister following the election. Baghli, a first-time candidate, is a Shia who declined to run as a representative of the Shiite political group in 1992. He received the largest number of votes in his district and became oil minister after the election. Both men took nationalist-democratic positions on major issues.

The initial image of the 1992 parliament as opposition-dominated was heightened by the reelection of Ahmad al-Sadoun to the speakership. The former speaker of the ill-fated 1985 parliament, Sadoun had kept the dismissed parliament's opposition elements together by holding rump meetings throughout the period between the July 1986 suspension and the Iraqi invasion in August 1990. His election was seen as a victory for the pro-democracy movement that had been led by the parliamentary remnant, and as recognition of his contribution to the restoration of parliamentary democracy in Kuwait.

### LET'S SPIN AGAIN

The initial optimism that surrounded the 1992 parliament soon faded as disputes arose that pitted Islamists against democrats. Many of these disputes were instigated and led by new Islamist members eager to demonstrate their dominance over democratic elements. An Islamist challenge over Kuwait University's ban on student veiling in laboratory and clinical settings was the opening shot in an Islamist bid to control education policy. This "gender war," which was prosecuted throughout the 1992 parliament, culminated in an Islamist victory in July 1996, when parliament voted to segregate Kuwait University within five years.

Popular preoccupation with the gender war overshadowed a more fundamental conflict. This dispute split assembly members institutionally, a continuation of the struggle over the constitutional division of authority that had precipitated the suspension of the 1985 parliament. Major battles were fought over parliament's investigatory powers and its constitutional right to abrogate emiri decrees promulgated during the parliamentary suspension.

The government pursued a stalemate strategy on these issues. When the regime and the opposition reached an impasse, such as in the struggle over whether and how the parliament could cancel laws passed in its absence, a cease-fire was

called. Sometimes a refusal to engage was preferred, as in the regime's response to the results of a three-year committee investigation into Kuwait's defense and foreign policy before and after the Iraqi invasion (the crown prince refused to attend sessions when the report was scheduled to be discussed). The split between the Islamists and the democratic nationalists was minimized in these encounters, which instead coalesced around the division between the government and the opposition.

Despite these conflicts, the 1992 parliament acted on a variety of issues. It made minor revisions to Kuwait's labor laws and passed measures easing restrictions on foreign contract labor and offering early retirement at full benefits to Kuwaiti working mothers. In reaction to reports of embezzlement and fraud in the oil and financial sectors, it tightened penalties for official malfeasance; it also took a more active role in defense planning, an area where parliamentary investigations had found significant financial irregularities. The assembly established a committee on human rights and ratified several pending international human rights treaties, although it reserved the right to deny equal rights to women. It passed a law permitting the sons of naturalized Kuwaitis to vote and run for office, and even a law requiring investors to repay a significant portion of the bad debts left over from the 1982 crash of Kuwait's illegal stock market.

The 1992 parliament also chalked up significant failures. It did not, for example, address the problem of illicit trade in labor visas. Kuwait's labor problems are as controversial as they are complex and the most severe were avoided by this highly divided body. Issues such as youth unemployment and rising crime rates did not receive sustained attention, although both attracted grandstanding by members with an eye on the next election. The 1992 parliament also failed to approve any of the broad-based taxes some insisted were needed to reverse structural budget deficits, and it did not develop a plan to privatize some state enterprises.

This parliament also had "behavior problems." Excessive rudeness by a few members in and out of the chamber disgusted many Kuwaitis. Confrontations on the floor, along with the prime minister's tactic of skipping parliamentary sessions whenever the agenda offended him, halted the legislative process and reflected negatively on the institution. Kuwaiti cynicism about incumbents had reached high levels by early 1994, prompting a cabinet reshuffle that did little to change people's minds.

And as the 1996 campaign hit high gear, a local newspaper, *al-Anbaa*, disclosed that some members were taking extra salary, presumably in lieu of pension benefits. Despite its legislative successes, the 1992 parliament was seen as divisive, incompetent, and corrupt by many Kuwaitis.

## THROW THE BUMS OUT

Especially vulnerable to popular criticism during the 1996 campaign were the democratic-nationalist "stars" of the 1992 parliament. The speaker of the parliament, Ahmad al-Sadoun, was said to think that he "owned" the speakership, and Kuwaitis rooted openly for billionaire candidate and former Finance Minister Jasim al-Khorafy to take over the speaker's position in the 1996 parliament. Another fallen star was Ahmad al-Rubei. His tenure as education minister had been tarnished by the gender war and by the perception that he had betrayed his principles in return for government support in a parliamentary vote of confidence on his performance. Various spin doctors worked overtime to circulate among Kuwaiti voters these and other uncomplimentary stories about some of the more popular opposition figures. Hints that the stories were orchestrated rather than spontaneous could be seen in their uniformity, not only with respect to the principal targets but also to the images and phrasing.

The communications network in Kuwait is dominated by the daily newspapers and by the *diwaniyyas*, informal gatherings of friends and relatives. Although formal press censorship ended in 1992, significant self-censorship continues. Kuwaiti newspapers reflect divergent interests, but popular opinion still can be manipulated through time-tested techniques such as the repetition of allegations, their endorsement by popular opinion leaders, and the suppression or ridicule of contrary information.

Diwaniyyas can, especially during elections, take on the character of political salons. Candidates sponsor diwaniyyas in their own tent headquarters and visit other diwaniyyas to troll for votes. Diwaniyyas are also vulnerable to manipulation; they are open to outsiders as well as to regulars and, by their nature, hospitable to a group dynamic encouraging "bandwagoning" as an electoral strategy.

Charges that leading members of the opposition had sold out their principles, their constituents'

interests, or both, dominated campaign rhetoric. Proof of these allegations rested on various member failings, prominent among them the passage of the Kuwait University gender segregation bill. The bill's final version had netted only one dissenting vote, from KDF member Abdullah Nibari. Democrats voting for the bill were accused of bowing to Islamist pressures to get reelected. Academic observers noted that, given parliament's makeup, government support ensured the bill's success and democratic opposition would have been futile. Voting for the compromise bill may have appeared to those members who were not enthusiastic about it as the only way to get beyond the gender war to more substantive issues prior to the campaign. Instead, the gender segregation vote dominated much of the campaign, especially after foreign journalists arrived to cover the election, and it was repeatedly cited as evidence of the democrats' perfidy among Kuwaitis themselves.

The popular uproar over the gender segregation bill prompted challengers across the political spectrum—including Islamists and service delegates—to adopt women's rights as a plank in their platforms. Kuwaiti women used the campaign to bring their demands before potential policymakers and to attract new allies from the public. Rather than being the sole responsibility of formal voluntary associations such as the Women's Cultural and Social Society, some efforts, including

a one-day women's strike (570 Kuwaiti women signed pledges to stay home from work on the strike day), were organized by ad hoc groups of young working women. Organizers went to the women's tents at diwaniyyas to pass out blue ribbons symbolizing support of women's rights. These novel activities capitalized on the salience of the gender issue and attracted newcomers such as students and young working women.

Controversial incumbent candidates found that their campaign diwaniyyas were likely to be contentious even when gender was not on the agenda. At a diwaniyya held by Ahmad al-Rubei just two days before the election, a member of the audience took the microphone and ridiculed the candidate. The heckler taunted him for, among other things, abstaining during the vote on the ministers' trial law; neglecting a campaign promise to build a new university within two years or else retire; and failing to publish anything academic during his tenure as a

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professor at Kuwait University.<sup>3</sup> That same evening a seminar on national unity held at Ali al-Baghli's diwaniyya ended in a fracas that was touched off by supporters of Baghli's most formidable opponent, the Shiite clergyman Hussain al-Qallaf.

Qallaf had run for an assembly seat in 1992 and it was thought he had a strong chance of winning that year. His hopes were dashed after he became a target of diwaniyya voting. Shortly before the 1992 election, Sunni Islamists went to several diwaniyyas in Qallaf's district to mobilize opposition to "the mullah" and develop support for Ismail al-Shatti, a candidate of the Sunni Islamic Constitution Movement (ICM), the Kuwaiti branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Determined not to be cheated of his prize in 1996, Qallaf moved to a district with a larger proportion of Shiite voters and only one Shiite incumbent.

Oil Minister Ali al-Baghli, the Shiite incumbent in the district, had bragged in 1992 that he was not a sectarian candidate, and had received votes from Sunni as well as Shia. But the candidacy of Qallaf, along with pre-election Sunni politicking, polarized the district along religious lines. Baghli's campaign added to the polarization, directing most of its attacks against Qallaf, referred to by the Baghli camp as the "Hezbollah candidate." When Qallaf's supporters protested remarks about their candidate at a Baghli "national unity" seminar, Baghli issued a tough rejoinder (though perhaps not so witty as Rubei's had been to the verbal parries at his diwaniyya—"And what have you published?").

Both heckling incidents damaged the stature of their targets in the eyes of many attending the events. The verbal altercations besmirched the candidates' dignity and the stature of their offices. Many speculated afterwards that the hecklers had been planted to do precisely that.

## THE SCORECARD

On the morning of October 8, Kuwaitis awoke to a new parliament in which the democratic

nationalists appeared to be the biggest losers. Only one of the four seats held by the democratic nationalists was won by a democrat, newcomer Abd al-Wahhab al-Haroun. Another was taken by a service candidate, Jasser al-Jasser, and the other two by former cabinet ministers, one of whom, Jasim al-Khorafy, promptly announced his candidacy for the speakership. Abdullah al-Nibari won, showing that it was possible to defy the Islamists and survive, but Ali al-Baghli lost to Hussain al-Qallaf, and Ahmad al-Rubei's district returned two newcomers, Ahmad al-Mulaifi and Hasan Jawhar.

The spin doctors crowed that the voters had indeed thrown the bums out, and that Kuwaitis had opted for conservatism in the 1996 parliament. But as in 1992, a rush to judgment may be premature. Two newcomers had beaten strong tribal incumbents who had been expected to win, and the 1996 parliament has at least as many Islamists as the old one. Meanwhile, KDF parliamentary veteran Sami al-Munayes, who had lost his seat to an independent Islamist in 1992, won it back in 1996.

That the 1996 parliament might have a few surprises up its various sleeves has been evident from the outset. The election for the speakership, expected to be a shoo-in for former Finance Minister Khorafy, ended in a one-vote margin of victory for the 1992 parliament speaker, Ahmad al-Sadoun. Khorafy is contesting the results of the election in the Constitutional Court and a decision is pending.

The 1996 assembly faces the same domestic problems that the 1992 parliament found too controversial to deal with: rising rates of violent crime, unemployment of Kuwaiti nationals, and budget deficits. Although sectarianism has been strengthened, a combination of entitlement dependency and constrained budgetary resources threatens to widen other social cleavages now that Kuwait's economic pie is no longer expanding. And Kuwait's external security remains precarious, with instability in its immediate neighborhood reducing the scope for regional solutions. Still, Kuwaitis have shown themselves to be a resilient and ingenious people. Moreover, a new generation is making its mark—a pragmatic and educated generation more interested in results than in fighting ideological battles. ■

<sup>3</sup>The trial law was a constitutional issue on which all the parliamentary ministers abstained from voting despite personal appeals by the speaker to opposition democrats.



"Iran's endurance does not mean that domestic and international challenges have disappeared; the Islamic Republic's problems are multifaceted and extremely serious."

## The Iranian Enigma

FARHAD KAZEMI

Nearly 18 years after the Islamic revolution, Iranian politics remains a puzzle. In 1979 the monarchy collapsed when a powerful king, buttressed by a strong army and supported by superpowers and friends (including Arabs and Israelis, Greeks and Turks, Indians and Pakistanis, East and West Europeans, and the Chinese), fell in an internal revolutionary struggle against a grand coalition of essentially unarmed civilians. Shortly thereafter, in what had ostensibly been one of the most secular societies of the Middle East, a Shiite-Islamic theocratic state was formally established.

The Islamic state survived the taking of United States diplomats hostage in 1979–1980; a long and devastating war with Iraq between 1980 and 1988; and routine conflicts with much of the world. It also had to deal with serious economic difficulties at home and the onset of a series of sporadic riots between 1991 and 1995 that were caused by deteriorating economic conditions and led by the urban poor—the Islamic regime's principal ideological constituency—in several major urban centers.

The United States policy of dual containment of Iraq and Iran, which was put into place in 1993, and its decision in May 1995 to proceed with a full trade embargo against Iran, have only exacerbated Iran's problems. The Iranian government has been charged with supporting terrorism abroad and abusing human rights at home, providing assistance to radical fundamentalist groups in the Arab world, undermining the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians, and stockpiling offensive weapons to dominate the Persian Gulf while at the same time seeking weapons of mass destruction. Though denied by the Iranian government, these charges have come to define Iran's relationship with the

United States and, to a lesser extent, Western Europe. It is clear that the United States trade embargo on Iran constitutes the latest, and in many ways the most dramatic, chapter of the Iranian saga.

The real puzzle is that the Iranian government has managed to survive in the face of enormous adversity both at home and abroad. This remarkable endurance cannot be explained by any one factor. Although many of the regime's opponents would readily point to repression at home to explain its endurance, the reality is more complicated and must include a look at the increase in the state's power over society and a gradual but dynamic process of institutional transformation since the revolution. This transformation has helped to modify and even moderate some aspects of the regime's ideological zeal and revolutionary purity.

It remains to be seen where all of this will eventually lead, since enormous domestic, regional, and international challenges confront the Islamic Republic. A directed process of further ideological and institutional transformation may allow the regime to survive its daily battles at home and abroad. Alternatively, a refusal by those in authority to concede some degree of power and autonomy to societal actors may herald serious and possibly crippling problems for the regime in the future.

### INCREASING STATE POWER

Viewed from the perspective of state-society relations, it is clear that the Iranian state has incrementally gained power over society in the past two centuries. This process began in the nineteenth century with the state's modernization efforts, which resulted in greater centralization of civilian and military institutions. The process intensified with the rise of the Pahlavi dynasty between 1925 and 1979 and its creation of and dependence on a standing national army with universal male conscription,

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FARHAD KAZEMI is a professor of politics at New York University and the outgoing president of the Middle East Studies Association of North America.

and the enormous increase in oil wealth in the wake of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973. But the powerful and centralized Pahlavi state, supported by the armed forces and fueled with oil wealth, found itself increasingly isolated and alienated from society, and eventually collapsed.

With the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979, the process of state dominance over society proceeded in earnest. In due course the state came to be viewed as the chief arm of the Islamic nation, designed to redress the wrongs of the ancien regime and to re-create the lost moral code. The key date for the finalization of this development was January 1988, when, in a dramatic religious decree, the undisputed religious and political master of the country, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, declared that the state could destroy a mosque should state survival be in jeopardy and the interest of the community require it. Khomeini's decree gave the final seal of approval to and sanctioned the state's dominance over civil society. A cynic can assert, with some justification, that Khomeini's act put theocracy on its head; now religion served the state, not the reverse.

## THE INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The ascendancy of the state since the Islamic revolution has also been helped by a complex process of evolution, consolidation, and centralization of state institutions. This can be observed in both coercive (military and security) and civilian institutions. In the military and security sphere, two factors loom large. First, due initially to the Iran-Iraq War and later to America's dual containment and trade embargo policies, the issues of national security and regime survival have become critical. The regime argues that the coercive institutions are required to maintain readiness and preparedness in case of a surprise attack (such as the Iraqi attack that led to the Iran-Iraq War) or any other form of military or security challenge. The Iranian National Security Council is the highest government body entrusted with overseeing this task. Various efforts to rebuild the ground, air, and naval forces, as well as the development of a defense industrial organization, are the direct results of the military's readiness mandate.

Second, since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, a major effort has been launched to bring an end to the anomalous situation of having two separate armies. The problem began with the decision by the ruling clerics, who did not trust the regular military because of its close ties to the Pahlavi regime, to

transform the revolutionary militias into a military force fully accountable to them. Soon after 1979, the Revolutionary Guards (Pasdaran) were created and given many functions that essentially paralleled those of the regular army. Both forces fought in the long Iran-Iraq War, often using different tactics and strategies.

When the war ended a decision was made to merge the two forces. A combined general headquarters was established in 1989 with the dominant position given to Pasdaran commanders. Although this ended the dualism of Iran's military forces, it also reaffirmed the preeminence of the Revolutionary Guards in the armed forces. The Guards' proven commitment to clerical rule, and their ideological posture of revolutionary Islam, reconfirmed their leadership role in the military. The consolidation of military forces has probably also eliminated a potential challenge to the regime from the ranks of the regular army.

In the civilian arena, institutional transformation has been even more pronounced and dramatic. This is evident in the changes that have taken place in the central institutions of the *faqih* (the top religious-political leader), presidency, and judiciary, which were the result of a set of constitutional amendments in 1989, after the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, that altered some key provisions of the 1979 Islamic Republic constitution.

The main thrust of these modifications was to centralize government functions in the *faqih*, presidency, and judiciary, and to adapt to the rapidly changing domestic and international environment. The judiciary, for example, was unified and centralized with a great deal of power assigned to the head of the office, who is a direct appointee of the *faqih*. This move was designed to bring different sets of laws and practices, some of which were remnants of the prerevolutionary legal system, into line with one another under the direction of a highly influential judge.

The executive branch amendments were even more substantial. What had been a weak and divided executive, which pitted an essentially ceremonial elected president against a relatively autonomous prime minister, was now fundamentally revised. The office of the prime minister was eliminated and its powers transferred to the president; a strong, popularly elected president was given centralized power at the helm of the executive branch. The president was given the right to name the country's first vice president (in effect his prime minister), who would not be confirmed by parliament

and would be accountable only to the president. In theory the new presidential system gave a strong president substantial authority and discretion in formulating and implementing economic and foreign policies.

Perhaps the most unusual change was in the office of the faqih. The overriding problem was how to find a successor for Ayatollah Khomeini. Given Khomeini's religious and political positions and unsurpassed popularity, the search prompted a significant revision to the qualifications for the holder of this omnipotent office. The all-important and stringent religious qualifications were reduced: the faqih no longer needs to be a top religious figure. His expertise in Islamic jurisprudence is sufficient as long as he has proper political and managerial skills. In other words, theological qualifications were purposely downgraded in favor of political acumen.

Moreover, this all-powerful office, with the authority to dismiss a popularly elected president at whim, is filled not through popular election but by an assembly of experts, the Majles-e Khebregan. The fact that the most powerful position in Iran is not chosen directly by the people has led at least one observer to describe the situation as "theocracy clothed in republican garb."

In many respects, the transformation of the faqih is a natural outcome of Khomeini's decree elevating the state over and above religion. The inherent tension between the religious and political dimensions of Iranian politics, however, has remained a thorn in the side of the country's top leader. Although this tension may have been resolved in constitutional terms, serious problems persist in the political arena. An important manifestation of this conflict was the ultimately unsuccessful attempt in 1994 by the Iranian faqih, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, to be proclaimed the world's top Shiite religious leader. Opposition among some Iranian clerics and many Shiites in Lebanon, Pakistan, and elsewhere prompted the politically astute Khamenei to withdraw his candidacy. Clearly, the time-honored criterion of learning in religious law could not be so easily dislodged in favor of political expediency in the international Shiite circles in selecting the top figure.

## INSTITUTIONAL RESTRAINTS ON POWER

The Iranian government is in many ways an authoritarian system even though it has a set of

checks and balances and a few countervailing institutions. Although the relative importance of these institutions in Iranian society varies, all continue to exercise a political role in the system. The parliament, for example, underwent changes as a result of the constitutional amendments of 1989. New regulations required a substantially larger number of deputies' signatures in order to lodge a complaint against the executive and to question ministers. Both methods had been used effectively in the past by many of the deputies to pressure the executive branch and check its exercise of power.

Despite these revisions and other extra-administrative measures by the executive branch to control the election process, parliament remains an important legislative body where significant debates take place routinely. However, government interference was evident in the parliamentary elections of March 1995, when some 40 percent of prospective candidates were rejected on vague, dis-

criminationary, and pernicious charges such as disloyalty to the political system. Still, the parliament continues to be a forum for debates on public policy and an important arena for the training of future leaders.

Another important countervailing institution, the Guardians Council, was not significantly changed by the constitutional amendments. The council is entrusted by the constitution with ensuring that the parliament does not pass any laws that do not conform with Shiite-Islamic precepts. Its 12 members

are divided equally between clerics and lay scholars and are appointed directly by the faqih. The council has used its judicial review rights and veto power on several occasions to nullify laws that were deemed too radical. It has also come to play a more central role in judging the qualifications of those who stand for legislative election. The council can—at least in theory—check the power of both the legislative and executive branches.

Another set of organizations that plays an important role in the relationship between the state and society in Iran is what has become known as the foundations (*bonyads*). Foundations are not new in the Islamic world. In the past there were many Islamic charitable foundations, as well as private foundations created by individuals for specific purposes. The more novel development in Iran has been the establishment of public foundations by the government soon after the revolution to help

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*A crisis of  
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Islamize the social order. Their enormous wealth came from property and funds confiscated from the former royal family and those charged with having close ties to the old regime. Two of these, the Oppressed and Martyr Foundations, have several billions of dollars in assets and are engaged in extensive business and commercial activities.

These foundations are tied in with some of the regime's key constituencies—the poor and the veterans of revolution and war—by providing them with jobs, housing, services, and cultural and recreational activities. These foundations serve as an important link between the government and the people. Although their autonomy from the state is at this point limited, they have the potential to become an important popular voice by virtue of their wealth, organization, and extensive patronage system.

## THE CHALLENGE

Iran's endurance does not mean that domestic and international challenges have disappeared; the Islamic Republic's problems are multifaceted and extremely serious. Although the regime has succeeded in eliminating through force opposition groups at home, it has done so at great cost. Its Islamization and other rigid policies have resulted in one of the most significant brain drains in modern history. The government's effort to attract at least some talent back has failed to result in any noticeable repatriation.

The problems facing the Islamic Republic are of several different types. One set of issues concerns the failure of the regime to deliver on the twin and exalted goals of social justice and economic self-sufficiency. Although some gains have been made in infrastructure and rural development, neither social justice nor economic self-sufficiency rules the day. Iran remains highly dependent on oil exports to fund its budgetary and development plans. This dependency has become even greater with the recent decision to pay back some of the country's \$30 billion foreign debt ahead of schedule. The immediate impact of this policy has been to reduce imports substantially, which will affect the consumption practices of the middle classes and hurt the poor.

Even though some segments of the poor have received benefits, their economic well-being is at best precarious. Several urban riots among the poor and squatters between 1991 and 1995 are harsh reminders that redistributive justice has not fully arrived.

The Iranian regime also suffers from two other problems that have economic implications. First is the remarkable growth in the country's population in the 1980s, which has made Iran the largest country in the Middle East, with some 65 million inhabitants. Although the nearly 4 percent annual growth rate of the 1980s has been checked, the population's sheer magnitude has severely constrained the state's ability to deliver goods and services and provide proper educational and job opportunities. Second, the prevalence of corruption at practically all levels of government has created a profound sense of cynicism, if not anger, at the direction Iranian society has taken. Moral and ethical issues that served as significant psychological forces in bringing down the old regime seem to have all but evaporated.

In the political sphere, the problems are no less severe. A crisis of authority that raises fundamental questions about the respective roles of religion and politics is apparent. Having united the two, the regime now has to face antagonisms directed at the clerics for failing to deliver on lofty promises. Pressure from Islamic radicals to push for further purification of social and political practices has alienated important elements in society. Voices of protest have been heard not only from disadvantaged religious minorities and women but also from some who believe in an Islamic order but do not want to see continuation of rule by the clerics.

It is clear, then, that the Iranian enigma persists. Although the Islamic Republic has survived through a dynamic process of adaptation and change, it has done so at a high cost. Given the importance of state-society tensions and the regime's serious regional and international difficulties, the course of the immediate future is hard to predict. If recent history is any guide, it is likely that the Islamic Republic will find a way out of this morass. ■

## BOOK REVIEWS

### ON THE MIDDLE EAST

#### The Failure of Political Islam

By Olivier Roy. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996. 238 pp., \$15.95, paper.

Islam has become, almost by default, the next great threat for many former cold war strategists who were trained to look for ideological enemies deadly, devious, and diabolical enough to be considered a global menace. The warnings of these strategists have found a receptive audience in the West and especially in the United States, which has little or no understanding of Islam and can only comprehend it as an undifferentiated mass connected with terrorist bombings and hostage taking. For the West, Islam is a made-to-order Other onto which fears can be ascribed, domestic focuses diverted, and defense budgets aimed.

Granted, the attack on the World Trade Center, the killing of tourists in Egypt and foreigners in Algeria, and the Taliban's well-publicized culture *krieg* in Kabul were the work of men who call themselves Muslim. But they are Muslims with a particular, politicized vision of Islam, an Islam that is as insular, ideological, and decentralized as was the West's last enemy, communism.

It is with a comparison to communism that Olivier Roy begins his valuable study of political Islam. His is not, however, a comparison that the unreconstructed strategists would find useful. Roy, who spent many years as an observer of Afghanistan—and who was among the first to note that the mujahideen “freedom fighters” were not taking their political cues from the *Federalist Papers*—argues forcefully that Islamism is based on two pre-existing tendencies. One is the fundamentalist call for a return to *sharia*, or Islamic law, albeit an ahistorical return that leaves no room for the secular. The other “is that of anticolonialism, of anti-imperialism, which today has simply become anti-Westernism—from Cairo to Teheran, the crowds that in the 1950s demonstrated under the red or national flag now march beneath the green banner. The targets are the same: foreign banks, night clubs, local governments accused of complacency toward the West. The continuity is apparent not only in these

targets but also in the participants: the same individuals who followed Nasser or Marx in the 1960s are Islamists today.”

Having placed the Islamists squarely inside the North-South debate, Roy also notes that the Islamists who protest Westernization, or more accurately, the trappings of modernity, are themselves the products of the West. Often the militants are not mullahs but are instead graduates of modern educational systems, usually with degrees in the sciences. They are the children of recently urbanized families who received “their political education not in religious schools but on college and university campuses, where they rubbed shoulders with militant Marxists, whose concepts they often borrowed. . . .” Appropriating the language and strategies of modern politics, the militants want to use Islam to return society to a past that never was in an effort to excise the socioeconomic ills that afflict so many countries in the Middle East.

Roy exposes the contradictions of political Islam—its rejection of modernity and its simultaneous use of it, its politicization of the religious—to establish the movement's failure as both a political force and a geostrategic factor: “aside from the Iranian revolution, Islamism has not significantly altered the political landscape of the Middle East.” This does not mean, however, that it will disappear. Population growth, economic inequity, urbanization—the forces that created the socioeconomic symptoms that Islamism hopes to cure—are still very real, and Islamists will no doubt ride to power where they have captured public resentment.

Yet, Roy argues, the Islamists will not cure these social ills, nor will they invent a new society (Iran and Afghanistan, he notes, are still awaiting transformation). The structural aspects of the state will remain in place, with Islamism molding itself into that structure. “For the rich the Islamic model is Saudi Arabia (revenue plus *sharia*); for the poor it is Pakistan, Sudan, and, tomorrow, Algeria: unemployment plus *sharia*.” The belief that the moral order created by *sharia* will bring forth a new life uncontaminated by the social and economic dislocations of modernity will prove to be a lie.

William W. Finan, Jr. ■

# THE MONTH IN REVIEW

November 1996

## INTERNATIONAL

### Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Nov. 25—An APEC summit meeting ends in Manila with a nonbinding agreement to eliminate tariffs on most technological products by 2000.

### Association of Southeast Asian Nations

Nov. 30—At a summit meeting in Jakarta, ASEAN leaders agree to admit Cambodia, Laos, and Burma (Myanmar) as full members.

### International Criminal Tribunal

#### on War Crimes in the Former Yugoslavia

Nov. 29—The tribunal sentences Drazen Erdemovic, an ethnic Croat and former soldier in the Bosnian Serb army who confessed to being part of an execution squad near Srebrenica in 1995, to 10 years in prison for "crimes against humanity."

### United Nations

Nov. 12—The General Assembly approves a nonbinding resolution calling for an end to the US embargo on Cuba that was imposed in 1962; the vote, 138 to 3 with 24 abstentions, is the largest majority yet in favor of the resolution.

Egypt formally nominates Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali for a 2d term; the US has opposed Boutros-Ghali's reelection, citing the need for UN reform.

Nov. 15—The Security Council votes unanimously to authorize through March 31, 1997, an international force to be led by Canada to provide relief to up to 1 million refugees in Zaire; Canada says the force, to which the US has promised at least 4,000 troops, will not attempt to disarm warring factions.

Nov. 19—The US vetoes a Security Council resolution to approve the nomination of UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali for a 2d term.

The US announces it will deploy no more than 800 troops as part of a Central African relief mission to be led by Canada.

Nov. 20—The UN suspends its aid programs in the Afghan capital of Kabul, citing recent threats against its relief workers by the Taliban militia, which took control of Kabul and approximately two-thirds of the country in September.

Nov. 25—UN and Iraqi officials announce that final agreement has been reached on a deal to allow Iraq to sell, on a renewable 6-month basis, \$2 billion of oil to finance civilian relief; the UN imposed economic sanctions on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

## AFGHANISTAN

Nov. 10—North of Kabul, hundreds of civilians flee fighting between the Taliban militia and the coalition forces of Ahmad Shah Masud and Abdul Rashid Doestam.

## ALGERIA

Nov. 10—A car bomb in an Algiers suburb kills at least 15 people and wounds 30; no one claims responsibility for the attack.

Nov. 29—Interior Minister Moustafa ben Masour says 86% of voters supported the proposed constitution in yesterday's referendum; the constitution would create a Council of the

Nation, one-third of whose members would be directly chosen by the president; the constitution would also ban religiously based political parties, such as the Islamic Salvation Front, which would probably have won parliamentary elections in 1992 had the government not canceled them; Masour claims turnout was 79%, but journalists say the figure was 25% to 50%.

## BELARUS

Nov. 24—President Alexander Lukashenko says that Belarus will send its 14 remaining nuclear missiles to Russia this week; under an agreement giving Russia control of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal, all nuclear missiles in Belarus are to be removed by the end of 1996.

Nov. 25—Election officials announce that 70.5% of voters in the November 9–24 referendum cast ballots in favor of rewriting the constitution to broaden President Lukashenko's power.

Nov. 28—Lukashenko signs into law the new constitution, which extends his presidential term to 2001 and gives him near-total control of the government; yesterday Lukashenko formally replaced the parliament with a new house of representatives.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Nov. 15—US President Bill Clinton announces that 8,500 US soldiers will be part of a "follow-on" NATO peacekeeping force that will stay in Bosnia until at least June 1998.

Nov. 19—Under American pressure, the Bosnian government dismisses Hasan Cengic, the Muslim-Croat Federation's deputy minister of defense; the US had demanded Cengic's ouster because of his alleged ties to Iran; a \$100 million US arms shipment to the Muslim-Croat Federation, which had been on hold, will now go forward.

Nov. 27—Bosnian Serb General Ratko Mladic steps down but names his deputy, General Manojlo Milovanovic, to replace him; on November 8 Bosnian Serb President Biljana Plavsic had dismissed both men.

## BURMA

Nov. 9—About 200 people attack cars carrying Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and other pro-democracy activists in Rangoon; Suu Kyi accuses the military government of organizing the attack, and says that security forces watched and did nothing during the incident.

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Nov. 30—Heavy fighting between rebel soldiers and government troops causes hundreds of residents to flee the capital city of Bangui; the soldiers have controlled much of the city since rebelling 2 weeks ago over pay and working conditions; they are calling for the resignation of President Ange-Felix Patasse.

## CHINA

Nov. 6—Authorities release dissident Chen Ziming and place him on medical parole; Chen was serving a 13-year sentence.

## COLOMBIA

Nov. 25—A report released today by US-based Human Rights Watch/Americas says that the Colombian military is linked



through its cooperation with paramilitary groups to the killing of civilians and that US financial assistance for the government's antidrug efforts may have been used to fight leftist guerrilla groups; a report last month by Amnesty International made similar allegations; the US denies that it worked with or advised cooperation with paramilitary groups.

## COMORO ISLANDS

Nov. 23—A hijacked Ethiopian Airlines plane flying from Addis Ababa to Nairobi crashes near the Comoro Islands, killing as many as 125 people; the crash occurred after the hijackers, in an apparent effort to reach Australia, refused to allow the plane to refuel.

## CROATIA

Nov. 21—After a demonstration by more than 100,000 people in Zagreb, the government announces that it is reversing its decision yesterday to close Radio 101, the country's last independent radio station.

## CUBA

Nov. 19—At the Vatican, President Fidel Castro meets with Pope John Paul II and invites the pope to visit Cuba in 1997.

Nov. 30—Spain agrees to name a new ambassador to Cuba; on November 26 the Cuban government rejected Spain's 1st choice, José Coderch, after he said Cuban dissidents would be welcome at the Spanish embassy.

## FRANCE

Nov. 29—Union and employer negotiators sign an agreement ending the 12-day-old strike by French truck drivers that had paralyzed much of Western Europe's economy; the truckers had called for higher pay and early retirement.

## GERMANY

Nov. 5—Birgit Hogeferd, a member of the guerrilla Red Army Faction, is sentenced to life in prison for killing 2 US soldiers and 1 American civilian in the 1985 bombing of a US air base in Frankfurt, and for attempting to kill the president of Germany's central bank.

## INDONESIA

Nov. 27—A court orders the release of 124 supporters of opposition leader Megawati Sukarnoputri who had been incarcerated after riots in Jakarta in July; 10 leftist students and 1 independent labor leader remain in prison.

## ISRAEL

Nov. 10—In Qiryat Sefer, an Israeli West Bank settlement, Israeli soldiers kill 1 Palestinian and wound 11 others after the soldiers try to block 200 Palestinian demonstrators protesting the expansion of the village.

Nov. 25—Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says that Israel will continue construction in existing Israeli West Bank settlements; earlier today Palestinian Authority President Yasir Arafat sent a letter urging Israel to halt further settlements in the West Bank.

## ITALY

Nov. 9—Between 400,000 and 800,000 people, led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, march in Rome to protest Prime Minister Romano Prodi's proposal for new taxes; a counterdemonstration in Naples led by a Prodi ally, Fausto Bertinotti, draws between 100,000 and 250,000 people.

Minister of Public Works Antonio Di Pietro resigns after being notified that he is the target of a government corruption investigation.

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## JAPAN

Nov. 7—The new parliament reelects Liberal Democratic Party leader Ryutaro Hashimoto prime minister with 262 of 500 votes.

## JORDAN

Nov. 8—King Hussein orders the release of Laith Shubailat, a government critic, from the Sawqa prison, where he was serving a 3-year term for "violating the king's dignity."

## KOREA, NORTH

Nov. 26—The government frees Evan Hunziker, an American arrested as a spy on August 24 after he entered the country in an attempt to gain Christian converts.

## KOREA, SOUTH

Nov. 5—South Korean troops kill 2 of the 3 remaining North Korean commandos from September's submarine incursion; 4 South Korean soldiers die in the shoot-out; the last commando remains at large.

## LITHUANIA

Nov. 11—Final results of the November 9 2d-round parliamentary elections show that the Homeland Union Party, led by Vytautas Landsbergis, the former independence leader, has won 35 of the 65 seats contested in this election; former Communists won 2 seats.

## MEXICO

Nov. 2—*The New York Times* reports that 6 people were killed in attacks between October 28 and October 31 by the Popular Revolutionary Army in 3 states.

Nov. 14—Institutional Revolutionary Party deputies pass an electoral law in the lower house of Congress that undermines 17 planned constitutional amendments aimed at election reform; the amendments had been agreed to in July after 22 months of talks with opposition leaders.

## PAKISTAN

Nov. 5—President Farooq Leghari dismisses Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto and her government on charges of corruption, nepotism, abuse of power, intimidation of the judiciary, and the collapse of law and order; Malik Meraj Khalid, a former parliamentary leader, is sworn in as caretaker prime minister; elections are to be held on February 3; Bhutto is put under house arrest in Islamabad, and her husband, Minister of Investments Asif Zardari, who is widely regarded as corrupt, is arrested in Lahore.

Nov. 6—Bhutto is freed from house arrest.

## ROMANIA

Nov. 4—With 50% of yesterday's presidential votes counted, leftist incumbent Ion Iliescu leads with 33% of the vote; centrist Democratic Convention candidate Emil Constantinescu is 2d with 28%; Iliescu and Constantinescu will face each other in a runoff on Nov. 17.

Nov. 17—In a runoff election, Emil Constantinescu of the Democratic Convention wins the presidency with more than 53% of the vote.

## RUSSIA

Nov. 5—Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin assumes presidential powers while President Boris Yeltsin undergoes a 7-hour multiple-bypass heart operation.

Nov. 6—Yeltsin formally resumes his presidential powers; he is expected to return to his full duties in 6 weeks.

Nov. 10—At a memorial service in Moscow for the slain Afghan war veterans' leader Mikhail Likhodei, at least 13 people are killed and dozens injured when a bomb explodes; police believe the target of the bombing was Sergei Trakhirov, who is in charge of a veteran invalid fund.

Nov. 16—In the southern Dagestan republic town of Kapisk, an explosion in a building housing Russian military officers kills as many as 32 people; officials say they suspect Chechen separatists are responsible for the blast.

Nov. 21—*The New York Times* reports that the last functioning Russian photo-reconnaissance satellite reentered the atmosphere on September 28; Russia has not yet launched a replacement.

Nov. 23—President Yeltsin orders the withdrawal of almost all Russian troops from Chechnya; the troops were scheduled to be withdrawn by January 27, 1997, when Chechen presidential and legislative elections are scheduled to be held.

## SERBIA

Nov. 18—Zajedno (Together), a 4-party opposition coalition, claims victory in at least 32 municipal elections held yesterday, including those in Belgrade and in several former Communist power centers.

Nov. 20—Opposition leader Vuk Draskovic urges supporters to take over city halls in towns where electoral commissions last night annulled victories claimed by Zajedno; Draskovic and other opposition deputies begin a hunger strike in parliament to protest the annulments; in Nis, the country's 2d largest city, as many as 7,000 people protest against President Slobodan Milosevic's Socialists and the city's electoral commission, which has declared a Socialist victory despite an earlier count that gave 41 of 70 seats to the opposition; yesterday, the government conceded defeat in Belgrade, the capital and largest city.

Nov. 24—A municipal court, citing "irregularities," annuls election results for 33 of the 70 Belgrade city council seats won by the opposition Zajedno coalition (10 of the 70 had already been annulled), depriving it of a majority on the 110-seat council; 20,000 opposition supporters march in Belgrade, and protests are reported in at least 4 other towns.

Nov. 25—More than 100,000 people gather in Belgrade, blocking streets and cheering speakers who vow to topple President Milosevic.

Nov. 27—Turnout is low in the government's new round of municipal voting, which the opposition is boycotting; 50,000 protesters march in Belgrade.

Nov. 30—Protests continue in Belgrade; 150,000 people demonstrate at the city hall and near the state-run television building.

## SLOVENIA

Nov. 11—Preliminary results from yesterday's parliamentary elections show the Liberal Democrats leading, with 25 of 90 seats, the conservative Slovene People's Party 2d with 19 seats, and the right-leaning Social Democrats 3d with 16; the Liberal Democrats, led by Janez Drnovsek, will try to form a broad coalition to continue economic reforms and seek entry into the EU and NATO.

## SPAIN

Nov. 2—A bomb severely damages a courthouse in Gijón, but wounds no one; police blame the Basque separatist group ETA for the bombing, and for yesterday's car bomb attack outside a Civil Guard barracks in Buñuel that injured 4 people.

Nov. 5—The Supreme Court rules, 6 to 4, not to summon opposition leader and former Prime Minister Felipe González as a witness or a suspect in the killing of Basque separatists by death squads in the mid-1980s; the court also clears former

Deputy Prime Minister Narcis Serra and a Basque regional associate, José María Benegas; the death squads are suspected in at least 27 murders in the "dirty war" of 1983 to 1987.

## SWITZERLAND

Nov. 12—Hanspeter Haeni, an ombudsman appointed by Swiss banks under international pressure to locate missing accounts of Holocaust victims, says he recently found assets belonging to 5 victims; the new discoveries bring the total assets discovered this year to \$1.28 million; the World Jewish Congress, which has demanded an end to Swiss banks' secrecy on the matter, claims there is \$7 billion in Holocaust victims' accounts.

## THAILAND

Nov. 18—Prime Minister-elect Chavalit Yongchaiyudh says he has formed a 221-seat, 6-party coalition; Chavalit's New Aspiration Party won 125 of 393 seats in yesterday's parliamentary elections; its rival, the Democratic Party, won 123.

## UNITED STATES

Nov. 6—Results from yesterday's presidential election show that President Bill Clinton, the Democratic candidate, won 49% of the popular vote; former Senator Bob Dole, the Republican challenger, received 41%; independent candidate Ross Perot received 8%; Republicans retain control of both houses of Congress.

Nov. 8—President Clinton names Erskine Bowles chief of White House staff.

*The New York Times* reports that the army has charged an officer and a drill instructor at a Maryland training center with raping female privates; the Army Training and Doctrine Command announces it has begun an investigation of whether such abuse is widespread.

Nov. 16—Federal authorities arrest CIA agent Harold Nicholson on charges of passing high-level classified information to Russian agents over the past several years; Nicholson is the highest-ranking CIA employee ever charged with espionage.

## ZAIRE

Nov. 1—After Rwandan troops reportedly cross into eastern Zaire, the 2 countries exchange artillery fire; Zairian Tutsi guerrillas push toward the key town of Goma.

Nov. 2—Zairian Tutsi rebels and Rwandan troops take the town of Goma.

Nov. 4—Laurent Kabila, the self-proclaimed leader of the rebel Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo-Zaire, declares a 3-week unilateral cease-fire to enable the approximately 500,000 Hutu refugees in south Kivu province to go home to Rwanda; it is unclear whether Kabila speaks for the rebels in north Kivu, where there are at least another 500,000 refugees, many of whom reportedly continue to move west, further into Zaire and away from Rwanda.

Nov. 5—André Ngandu Kassasse, the leader of the rebel army controlling Goma, invites the UN and international relief agencies to return and resume operations in rebel-controlled areas.

US officials say 1.2 million Rwandan Hutu refugees have fled camps in north Kivu, and 200,000 Burundian Hutu have fled in south Kivu.

Nov. 6—At least 2 people are killed in a demonstration at the national university in Kinshasa; students and others have

expressed outrage over the country's military humiliation by Rwanda-backed rebels, and over government corruption and ineptitude in general; a wave of anti-Tutsi and anti-Rwandan violence has also swept the capital.

Nov. 9—The French daily *Libération* publishes an interview with Zairian President Mobutu Sese Seko, in which he says he will go home soon to confront the crisis in eastern Zaire; Mobutu is in France recovering from surgery.

Nov. 12—UN officials say that Canada has offered to lead an international force to bring food, medicine, and protection to refugees in eastern Zaire.

Nov. 13—US President Bill Clinton says that US troops will be part of a Canadian-led force of up to 15,000 soldiers that will help bring food, water, and medicine to refugees in eastern Zaire.

Nov. 14—Zairian rebels and Rwandan Hutu guerrillas known as the interhamwe trade artillery fire between Goma and the Mugunga refugee camp.

Nov. 15—Zairian rebels rout the interhamwe at the Mugunga camp, freeing some 500,000 Rwandan refugees to return home; the first 50,000 refugees arrive at a UN camp at Gisenyi, just inside Rwanda.

Nov. 16—At least 200,000 more refugees return to Rwanda.

Nov. 17—Another 100,000 refugees cross the border into Rwanda, and 100,000 more are thought to be just behind, at the end of a 40-mile-long column; 150,000 refugees have apparently fled west from Mugunga with the retreating interhamwe, and some 490,000 more remain unaccounted for south of Lake Kivu, near Bukavu.

Nov. 22—Relief workers say there are 700,000 refugees still in need of help in eastern Zaire, but the US insists the number is 150,000 to 200,000; Rwanda says only 100,000 remain and are on their way home.

Nov. 27—Some 50,000 supporters cheer opposition leader Étienne Tshisekedi's return to Kinshasa; Tshisekedi had visited with his longtime foe, President Mobutu, in France, and claims that Mobutu gave him permission to form a new government; meanwhile, the government accuses Tshisekedi of aiding the rebel uprising in the eastern part of the country.

Nov. 29—About 7,500 refugees cross into Rwanda, the first of about 40,000 believed to be emerging from mountains along the shore of Lake Kivu.

## ZAMBIA

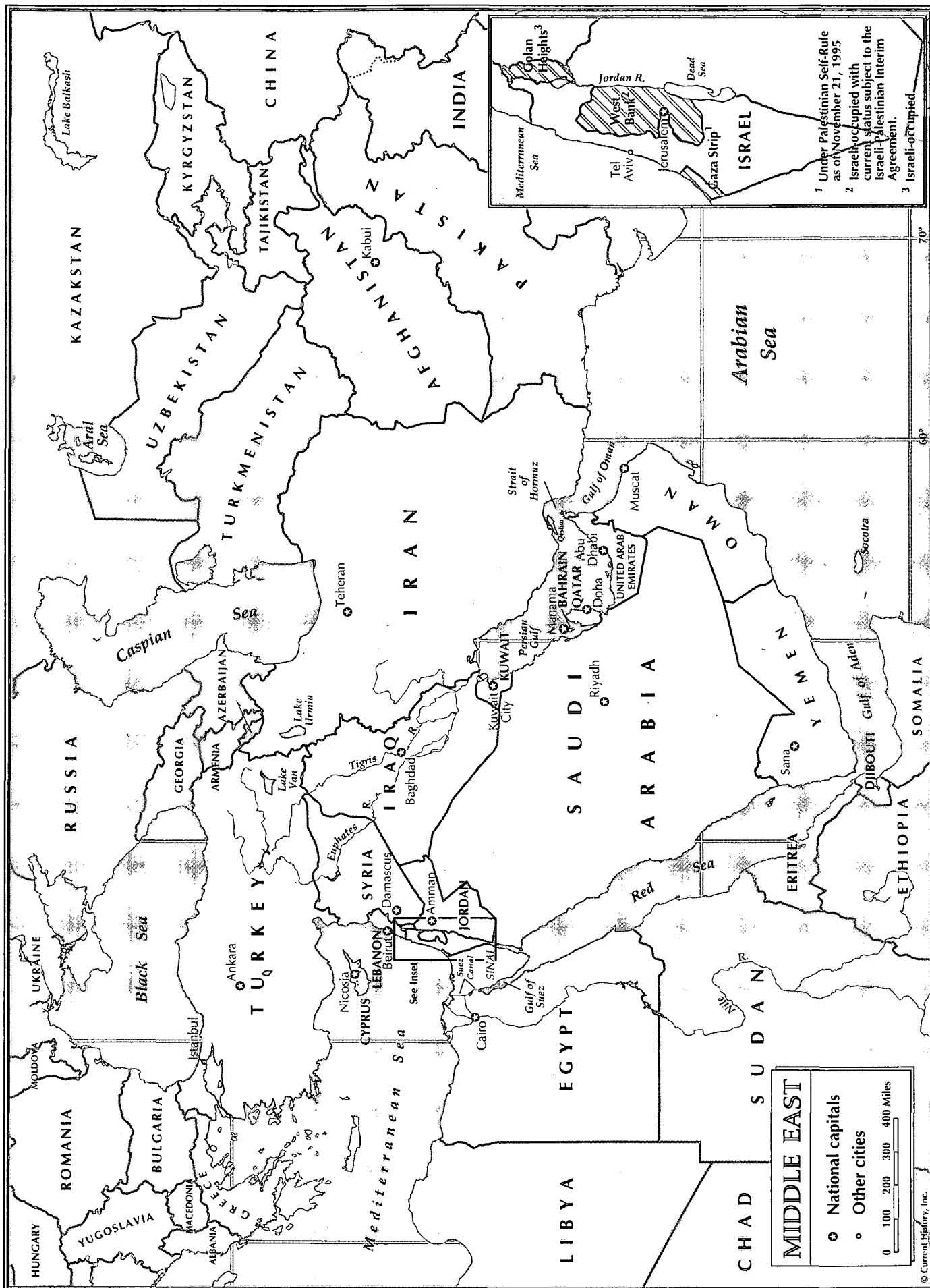
Nov. 20—With two-thirds of the November 18 vote counted, President Frederick Chiluba wins reelection with 80%, and his Movement for Multiparty Democracy is well ahead in parliamentary voting; President Kenneth Kaunda and his United National Independence Party boycotted the elections after Kaunda was taken off the ballot; the nongovernmental Clean Campaign Committee has refused to certify the vote, citing the boycott, inadequate registration, biased news coverage, and widespread vote-buying.

Nov. 28—One day after opposition leaders vowed to protest the November 18 elections and called on regional leaders to intervene and return the country to democracy, President Chiluba dissolves his cabinet and puts the military on full alert. ■

*Errata:* In the September 1996 issue Month in Review, Tansu Ciller was incorrectly identified as the leader of Turkey's Motherland Party; Ciller leads the True Path Party.

In the errata notice published in the December 1996 issue, Quinipiac College was spelled incorrectly.





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